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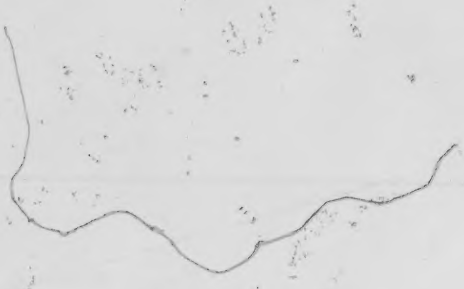

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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

# LANGUAGE USE IN IMAGINATIVE/PRETEND PLAY

BY

MARY AGNES WINTON

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND

RESEARCH IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR

THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

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Abstract

The relationship between language and play in child development has been of interest to psychologists and educators. This study focussed upon the language displayed by two children who were identified by their teacher as displaying strengths in the use of language during social imaginative play. Comprehensive analysis of extensive language data obtained in a kindergarten classroom context revealed that these children's language could be classified within a range of purposes served by a range of strategies. Furthermore the communicative competence of these children paralleled the findings of others in the study of master players. Additional factors such as teacher involvement, materials, and groupings were identified as contributing to the development of play themes. Implications from these findings have been discussed.

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Chapter One

## Introduction to the Study

> The path from play to internal processes in school age...is the main path of development; one who understands this connection understands the main element in the transition from preschool to school age. (Vygotsky, cited in El'Konin, 1966/1971, p. 230)

Children seem to have a natural instinct for play. They learn more about the familiar and discover the unfamiliar through their play; "within the context of play, children are granted opportunities for discovery without risk" (Fein, 1978, p. 269). Child development theorists consider the play of children to be critical to their overall development (Piaget, 1962; Vygotsky, 1966/76). Although there are differing opinions regarding the exact nature and function of play, it is consistently viewed as a necessary component in the development of the child.

Play is typically categorized in a hierarchy of stages which progress from the egocentric infant to the social adolescent. These many stages of play have been discussed and researched for years and are deliberated in an abundance of literature. Play is not easily defined despite all this attention. "Because of the nature of play - a concept that everyone understands and no one understands - researchers may never unravel all of its mysteries" (Bergen, 1988, p. 7). The

complexity of children's play continues to marvel the researcher who searches for meaning and to amaze the educator who must often justify the value of play in the classroom.

In the preschool years a child's play becomes more social. These social interactions involve a substantial amount of language. The exact nature of this involvement has been addressed more extensively in the last decade. Specifically, the relationship between pretend play and language development has been of interest to researchers and educators. It remains a fascinating area of study as one attempts to understand the relationship between these two very complex areas of child development.

## Purpose of the Study

Because the link between play and language is often mentioned but vaguely understood, the purpose of this study was to describe and analyze how two kindergarten children use language in an imaginative/pretend play context. Attention to the interaction of language use and play processes was the intent of the study.

## Specific Research Question

The purpose of the study has resulted in the following research question: How do two children, identified by their teacher as using extensive language during imaginative play, employ language during this play?

## Significance of Study

The process of education rests on the ability of the teacher to facilitate the natural growth processes of children. The spontaneous development of play and language are known to characterize the developing child, but the interaction between these processes remains only partially understood. There is evidence, however, that the play-language relationship provides a critical foundation for social development and literacy.

Consequently, further understanding of the language-play link may contribute to the teacher's ability to facilitate growth, monitor progress, provide fostering contexts, and identify students at risk.

## Definition of Terms for the Purpose of this Study

On the basis of literature in the area of play the following definitions will be used in this study. The terms are not mutually exclusive in that some, for example imaginative play, encompass others.

Imaginative/Pretend Play

This will be considered a generic term as it will encompass dramatic, socio-dramatic, and thematic-fantasy play. These are differentiated by the nature of the stimulus - within the real world or beyond the real world of experience.

1. Within the child's real world experience:

Dramatic play. "The child takes on a role: he pretends to be somebody else... he imitates the person, in action and speech, with the aid of real or imagined objects" (Smilansky, 1968, p. 7). This is solitary, and the themes and events are within the realm of the child's experience (Saltz, 1974).

Socio-dramatic play. "Dramatic play becomes socio-dramatic if the theme is elaborated in cooperation with at least one other roleplayer; then the participants interact with each other both in action and verbally" (Smilansky, 1968, p. 7).

2. Beyond the child's real world experience:

Thematic-fantasy play. This involves enacting roles and themes not related to the children's personal experiences; the source may be literature or film (Saltz, 1974). This may be in group or solitary.

Play Period

This may be a spontaneous or semi-structured time as designated by the teacher. In this study it usually consisted of approximately 60 minutes per day in center time.

## Design of the Study

### Gathering the Data

This study was designed to examine how two children, identified by their teacher as using extensive language during imaginative play, employ language during this play. Data was collected in a kindergarten classroom through various means: videos of the center play time and the circle times, the researcher's fieldnotes, the teacher's log, and interviews with the teacher.

### Analysis of the Data

Data analysis procedures consisted of transcribing and documenting the verbal and non-verbal language in the center time that involved imaginative play. Data from the play center videos was analyzed according to Mehan's (1979) use of recursive rules. Strategies and purposes of language were identified and a purpose-strategy matrix was developed to account for the data. The data was coded using the matrix and then inter-rater reliability was evaluated.

Information regarding influences on the play were summarized from the log, the interview data, and the fieldnotes. These influences were discussed under three general areas.

## Limitations of the Study

1. Because the study includes a small sample, limited time, and observations from only one classroom, the findings may not be generalizable beyond the sample.

2. The presence of the researcher and video equipment may have altered the naturalistic state of the environment which would have had an impact on the observed behavior although the researcher attempted to minimize any effect.

3. Complex recording of dynamic social interactions preclude careful control of elicitation processes. Uncontrolled factors potentially bias naturalistic studies of this nature.

## Overview of the Organization of the Thesis

In this first chapter, the purpose of the study, the research question, the significance of the study, the definition of terms, a brief outline of the design of the study for gathering and analyzing the data, and the limitations of the study were presented. In chapter two a review of the related literature and research is presented. Chapter three describes the design of the study. Chapter four presents the analysis and discussion of the data as it relates to the research

question. Summary, conclusions, and implications for educational practice and research are presented in chapter five.

# Chapter Two

## Survey of Related Literature and Research

Play and language are considered critical in a child's development; both have been extensively researched as independent categories within the field of human development. It has been only in the last decade that extensive research has focussed upon the interrelationship between the two. The evidence to date suggests a complex relationship; however, the exact nature of this relationship is not as yet clearly understood.

### Studies of Play and Language

People have defined play in numerous ways. Some attributes, generally cited as critical, have been noted by Garvey (1977), who defined play as that activity which is pleasurable and enjoyable, has no extrinsic goals, is spontaneous and voluntary, and involves active engagement (p. 4). She saw play as linked to cognitive and social roles as well as to language learning. Although Garvey considered communication to be critical in make-believe play, her studies did not explore language in relation to make-believe play.

Similarly, many language theorists have incorporated the value of imaginative language (but not the role of play) into their structure of language function and development (Barnes, 1976; Halliday, 1969; Tough, 1977). In their comprehensive

lists of language functions both Tough and Halliday specifically included the category "imaginative language".

Piaget (1962) devised a model of play that was based on the child's cognitive development. The three stages he described were practice games or functional play, symbolic games, and games with rules. In Piaget's stage theory, when the child approaches formal operational functioning, language is considered to be more central to the child's intellectual development (Furth, 1970, p. 58). In general Piaget viewed language as following cognition. He also viewed play as being important in a preschool child's cognitive development. "Specifically, Piaget suggested that children's general semiotic, or representational, competence begins in symbolic play." (Pellegrini, 1990, p. 76).

Vygotsky (1966/1976) viewed play and language as critical in a child's development. He suggested that play can create the zone of proximal development of the child (Vygotsky, 1976, p. 252). This zone is defined as follows:

> This is the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with capable peers. (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86)

The potential of play for fostering development was specifically discussed by Vygotsky:

> Is it possible to suppose that a child's behaviour is always guided by meaning, that a pre-schooler's behaviour is so arid that he never behaves with candour as he wants to simply because he thinks he should behave otherwise? This kind of subordination to rules is quite impossible in life, but in play it does become possible: thus, play also creates the zone of proximal development of the child. In play a child is always above his average age, above his daily behaviour; in play it is as though he were a head taller than himself. As in the focus of a magnifying glass, play contains all developmental tendencies in a condensed form; in play it is as though the child were trying to jump above the level of his normal behaviour. (1976, p. 552)

Similarly, since Vygotsky viewed language and thought as operating in a symbiotic relationship, investigations of either children's language or play must also consider the relation of one to the other.

In her classic study on social participation among preschool children, Parten (1932) described social play in a series of six categories that have been interpreted as being hierarchical in nature: unoccupied, onlooker, solitary play, parallel play (plays beside but not with others), associative play (plays and shares with others), and cooperative play (group play with negotiation among players) (p. 251). The role of language in social play was not addressed within this study since language studies at that time were focussing on the structure of language rather than its functions. Within her hierarchy, Parten considered solitary play as a less mature form of play. Similarly, recent studies (Moore, Evertson, & Brophy, 1974; Rubin,

Maioni, & Hornung, 1976) "generally support a view of solitary play as a category of social participation that changes in cognitive complexity with age" (Monighan, 1985, p. 8).

One of the first to focus on play and its relation to language development was Smilansky (1968) in her seminal study on the sociodramatic play of disadvantaged children. She elaborated on Piaget's (1962) cognitive play classifications and suggested four stages of play; these were functional play, constructive play, dramatic (or symbolic) play, and games with rules. She focussed upon sociodramatic play, a form of dramatic play, as a means of enriching the language and facilitating the school success of the disadvantaged preschool child. Three functions of verbalization during sociodramatic play were noted: "it appears as imitation of adult speech, it is used for imaginative make-believe (let's pretend), and it serves for the management of the play" (p. 27). Smilansky identified six play elements as critical for sociodramatic play: imitative role play, make-believe in regard to objects, make-believe in regard to actions and situations, persistence (lasts at least 10 minutes), interaction (at least two players), and verbal communication (p. 9). The first four criteria apply to dramatic or solitary play, the last two to sociodramatic or group play only (p. 9). Language can be an integral part of both types of play although the function of the language might differ between the two.

## The Role of Language in Play

Some researchers have discussed specific roles of language in the child's imaginative play. In a study of three and four year olds involved in spontaneous fantasy play at the sandbox, Cook-Gumperz and Corsaro (1977) found that the children used specific language strategies to create and sustain the social play.

> In play of this type children cannot rely on conventionalized expectations since each interactive event is spontaneous and often novel. They, therefore, employ specific communication strategies to cue each other to the emerging meanings of their cooperative play. These strategies include: (1) the use of paralinguistic cues to signify fantasy; (2) the use of repetition and expansion to structure emerging interaction; (3) the use of semantic tying as a means of expanding the contributions of other interactants; and (4) the verbal descriptions of their behaviors as they occur. (p. 425)

Cook-Gumperz and Coraso suggested that children's employment of communicative devices is often overlooked in studies of child language.

Levy (1984), in discussing Smilansky's work, saw words being used in imaginative play to take the place of reality in four ways: to change personal identity, to change the nature of objects, to substitute words for action, and to describe situations. She further suggested that "language is involved in planning, developing, and maintaining play" (p. 50). Extending beyond the play-language interaction Yawkey and Hrncir (1982) speculated that there were four reasons for the links between imaginative play, communication, and creative development:

1. through imaginative play the preschooler defines and assumes roles...various forms of communication are required.

2. imaginative play is linked with communication through the child's social involvements....children model and imitate observed actions and words in imaginative play.

3. creative expression combines mental and social thoughts and bridges experiences with roleplaying (e.g. the child relies on experience plus creative thoughts to express a role).

4. concentration involves attention to actions, situations, and ideas developed in pretend play....increased concentration requires extended communication. (p. 265-266)

Despite the importance of the play-language interaction in children there is variability across social contexts. Play differences appear to exist between lower and middle socio-economic status preschoolers. Rubin et al. (1976) found lower-class preschoolers displayed significantly more solitary and parallel-functional play and significantly less associative-constructive and cooperative-dramatic play than did middle-class preschoolers (p. 418).

Other studies (Saltz & Johnson, 1974; Lovinger, 1974), in addition to Smilansky's, have noted a relationship between explicitly training sociodramatic/fantasy play in preschool disadvantaged children and increased facility with language. The reason for this difference was investigated by Saltz (1977) who explored the possibility that verbal stimulation from an adult

(concerning the specific play scenario) may be the critical factor since many disadvantaged children lack this in the home environment. His results did not substantiate verbal stimulation by itself as a critical factor in the study; rather, he concluded that the physical enactment of the fantasy experience was the significant factor.

Links between play, usually imaginative play, and language have been posited by others. These links are often discussed in relation to the underlying competencies that allow the child to successfully combine play and language. For example, McCune-Nicolich and Carroll (1981) referred to the development of both language and play as being influenced by the child's capacity to symbolize. They further stated that as play matures the role of language becomes critical in the play. McCune-Nicolich and Brushkin (1982) speculated that both symbolic play and language are dependent upon the development of underlying representational capacities (p. 43). Schirmer (1989) also reported that "the correspondences between the development of imaginative play and language demonstrate an underlying relationship between the two systems" (p. 220). Despite frequent references to the play-language symbiosis, the precise nature of this relationship has yet to be fully determined.

## Imaginative Play and Literacy

Extending the study of play and language, Pellegrini (1985) explored the relationship between children's symbolic play and literate behavior involving

decontextualized language and narrative skills. It was suggested that there are similar mental processes involved in both of these representational processes. Pellegrini cautioned against drawing a causal link between symbolic play and literate behavior; rather, the two behaviors should be regarded as coexisting. In a later article Pellegrini and Galda (1990) suggested that the "language of children's social make-believe play and the language of literacy are similar to the extent they serve similar functions" (p. 77). They posited that the "functional demands of conveying meaning to peers in make-believe contexts provide children the opportunity to learn and practice using a specific language variant, or register, that is similar to school language and the language of literacy" (p. 77). Furthermore, they felt that the language of imaginative play and early literacy have some common components. These components are explicit reference (endophora, elaborated nominal groups), linguistic terms (verbs such as 'read, say, talk'), and temporal conjunctions (e.g. "and then"). Pellegrini and Galda suggested that "these oral language forms become the bases of subsequent school-based literacy" (p. 82).

Others have posited a direct link from competency in imaginative play to effective reading behaviors. Westby (1988) postulates that "poor readers may exhibit a deficit in ability to take the roles of characters in stories" (p. 8). She found that the low-average readers exhibited significantly less mature play behavior, focussing on actions rather than role behaviors. This possibly could be

attributed to difficulties in making the distinction between self and others which is a necessary skill for reading.

Christie (1990) suggested that when the print medium becomes part of a child's dramatic play, literacy development can be promoted in various ways. First, children can demonstrate what they know about the everyday uses of written language. Second, children can experiment with emergent reading and writing in a pleasurable, contextualized environment. Third, dramatic play can help children develop knowledge of story structure by providing an opportunity for their own script.

> Finally, they have opportunities to use a literacy vocabulary, including terms such as 'read, write, pencil, paper, and book' in meaningful contexts. Use of such metalinguistic terms during play has been found to be positively related to measures of emergent literacy development (Christie, 1990, p. 543).

## Social Dynamics of Play and the Competent Player

Imaginative play does not have equal importance across the years of childhood. In fact, social dramatic or imaginary/pretend play reaches its peak with the four to six year old age group (Christie, 1990). The dynamics within a play group of children in the four to six year age range are especially interesting. Rubin (1988) summarizes the literature on these dynamics stating "young children who engage in high frequencies of sociodramatic play are a) more popular among their peers, b) more intelligent, c) more creative, and d) better social-cognizers

and perspective takers than their age mates who are less inclined to participate in social pretence" (p. 69). Further to this, Hetherington (1986) suggests that "imaginative play seems particularly important in the development of social competence" (p. 542). She indicates that imaginative play permits children to practice their future roles as well as to experience the roles of others and teaches children to function as part of a social group. Conversely, Rubin (1988) states that those children who engage in high frequencies of non-social (solitary) pretence, when in formal group settings with peers, demonstrate a delay in the development of social skills. He cautions that this evidence of delay only applies to formal group settings and does not apply to the home where solitary dramatic play is quite common with the preschool age group.

In contrast to the positive significance of socio-dramatic play in the four to six year age group, Rubin (1988) explains that after age six the social value of imaginative/pretend play gradually diminishes. His more recent studies suggest that "the frequent display of sociodramatic play becomes an increasingly less important marker of competence with age" (p. 70). Children, after 6 or 7 years of age, are expected to gradually move from frequent displays of socio-dramatic play (in group settings) into group games with rules. Rubin explains that "during the concrete operational years (i.e. 6 or 7 through 10 or 11) social and cognitive prowess is associated not with sociodramatic play, but with formalized, rule-governed cooperative/competitive games" (p. 70-71). In fact, a child at age 10 who exhibits frequent displays of social pretence is increasingly rejected by his

peers. Rubin does maintain that the skills developed in a child's earlier social fantasy play probably aids him/her in becoming a competent game player and future citizen.

The highly skilled pretend player has been discussed by Fein (1987) who captured competence in play in the term "master player". She states that "theoretical considerations suggest that when master players produce pretend episodes, the play is marked by referential freedom, denotative license, affective relationships, sequential uncertainty, and self-mirroring" (p. 283). She further elaborates on the skills of these superb pretend players as evident in their use of a rich array of role and object transformations as well as the way they build on one another's transformational shifts. Fein regards this as a bottom-up processing of pretend scenarios. That is, the children build on each other's ideas in the pretend scenarios which are typically characterized by moment-to-moment improvisations.

Westby (1988) states that children by age 5 can plan their own behavior in play as well as plan and monitor the roles and behaviors of others.

> This is most frequently seen in the more competent children in kindergarten classes who announce the play theme, everyone's role in the play, and precisely what each child is to say and do, and when and where they are to say and do it. (p. 7)

Usually one or two leaders will emerge from any type of group play. The skilled play leader that emerges in social imaginative play would typically "suggest new roles or play themes, add greater detail and complexity to enactments,

enhance the make-believe quality of play, and regulate the social interaction of players within a group" (Trawick-Smith, 1988, p. 51). Trawick-Smith suggested that this type of leader, in contrast to the less popular aggressive type, is very good at compromising and accepting suggestions of other players for the development of the play. The highly skilled player must be able to give and take as well as know when to lead and when to follow. Although following is typically not a submissive action by the leader, in these situations following becomes a chosen action. This diplomacy appears to be the key to being an effective play leader.

In this consideration of play leaders, the link between play and language becomes evident once again. "There is evidence that diplomatic requesting requires not only social understanding but linguistic competence as well" (Trawick-Smith, 1988, p. 54). Consistent with the need for diplomatic language, Garvey (1975) found that older children (4-year-olds vs 3-year-olds) employed more indirect requests than imperatives which led to greater compliance by peers. Trawick-Smith (1988) similarly suggests that "such nonimperative statements represent developmentally advanced and effective leadership strategies" (p. 54). He also found that effective play leaders use 'tactful rejection' when not accepting the initiatives of other players. This usually involved giving a clear rationale for the rejection and allowing the other children opportunities to rebut. In summary, an effective play leader is diplomatic in both requesting and rejecting.

Hartup (1983) discussed child leaders in a general sense as being "active and vigorous in participation with his/her peers as well as successful in their attempts to influence other children" (p. 152). Clearly a successful leader must be popular with his/her peers and have a good sense of the language of diplomacy within the role of a negotiator.

## Summary

The importance of play and the importance of language have been widely considered in relation to child development. The specific relationship between language and play, however, is somewhat less understood. The understanding of the critical role of language in play has been advanced recently by those studying the effective use of language necessary for becoming a "master player". Conversely, the contribution of play to language has been a theoretical foundation of those exploring the contribution of symbolic play to the development of literacy.

Chapter Three

## Design of the Study

The study of language and play in natural contexts requires focussed data gathering and disciplined analysis. The nature of this study, the sample, the data collection methods, the pilot, the research schedule, and the data analysis procedures are reported in this chapter. A summary concludes the chapter.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to describe and analyze the language use of two kindergarten children during imaginative/pretend play.

### Specific Research Question

How do two children, identified by their teacher as using extensive language during imaginative play, employ language during this classroom play?

### Nature of the Study

After several months in kindergarten, children adapt to the classroom context and exhibit a sense of belonging in a familiar space. For this reason the present study was conducted in the children's kindergarten classroom in order to describe

their use of language in imaginative/pretend play in a familiar environment. This type of study can be described as naturalistic in that attempts were made not to disturb the normal ecology of the classroom.

The data collected were observational and descriptive in nature. The researcher was a passive-participant observer. Spradley (1980) describes this as follows:

> The ethnographer engaged in passive participation is present at the scene of action but does not participate or interact with other people to any great extent. About all you need to do is find an "observation post" from which to observe and record what goes on. (p. 59)

The researcher videotaped kindergarten children during their center time in the classroom. In order to monitor the multiple variables involved in how language was used within imaginative/pretend play, two kindergarten children were targeted within their play group in their classroom setting. The data were descriptive in that the study attempted to describe how the target children used language in this specific setting. The present study considered verbal and non-verbal language used to communicate with others and self; non-verbal behaviors were noted (Ringler & Weber, 1974).

## The Sample

To fulfill the purpose of the study the children needed to have developed beyond parallel play into social and imaginative levels of play; this generally

occurs in the 4 to 6 year old age group. The study was also planned in relation to Rubin, Maioni, and Hornung's (1976) finding that sociodramatic play occurred more frequently in a middle-class environment, and Smilansky's (1968) belief that disadvantaged children were involved in very little sociodramatic play. Therefore, it was decided to collect data in a setting where sociodramatic play would be most likely to occur, a kindergarten classroom in a predominantly middle-class neighborhood.

A kindergarten setting was selected because curricular organization at that level uses a play-based philosophy as directed by Alberta Education. It was therefore posited that sociodramatic play would likely occur more frequently at this grade level. Since this study focussed on extended sociodramatic play, a classroom was chosen where at least one hour of time was available to the children for this type of play. Moreover, the selected program considered the children's need for time to plan, engage in, and reflect on their play. It was also important to have a class where the play was spontaneous or semi-structured and the teacher was not intrusive in determining the nature of the play. In these spontaneous or semi-structured settings, children have the freedom to structure their play and their use of time. The study, therefore, considered a classroom where extended, spontaneous sociodramatic play would be most likely to occur and be most readily observed.

Selection of the School and the Classroom

An Early Childhood Consultant from a local school board was contacted and asked to recommend three programs that encompassed the following: (a) exemplified the play-based Alberta Education Early Childhood philosophy, (b) had approximately one hour of play time per day and, (c) minimized sex role differentiation in play. This latter variable was considered important to increase the potential freedom for the children to make their own role decisions (Curry & Bergen, 1988).

After an initial telephone contact by the Early Childhood Consultant, the researcher contacted the teachers of these programs by telephone and explained the nature of the study. All of the teachers expressed an interest in the research. The researcher then spent a morning in each of the classrooms while class was in session for the purposes of selecting one class for the pilot and another class for the research study. At this time the researcher also met with the principal in each of the schools to explain the nature of the study.

In addition to the previously mentioned program characteristics, practical considerations required that the classroom have reasonable acoustics and a schedule of one month without excessive extra-curricular events which could hinder the videotaping schedule. The researcher also considered the ease that the principal, the teacher, and the class might feel with the methodology of the study. These "people variables" were considered important in order to conduct the investigation in as natural a setting as possible.

Selection of the Data Sources

The data sources consisted of two kindergarten children and their classroom teacher.

The teacher was asked to choose two children who used language in their play and frequently engaged in sociodramatic play during the center time. It was also suggested that the children should have a regular attendance record and that they should be similar on as many of the following variables as possible: age, number of siblings, position in the family, participation in extra-curricular activities, home environment (e.g. number of parents working outside the home), and the ease with which their parents would support the research. These variables were considered important in establishing a degree of commonality between the children.

The researcher made a homevisit to the families of the two children that the teacher had targeted. In this way the nature and purpose of the study were explained to the parents so they could make an informed decision about giving their permission for participation in the study.

Once permission was granted, the target children and the other classroom children were informed of the nature of the study.

Description of the School

The research was conducted in an elementary school in a suburban, predominantly middle-class neighborhood. The school placed value on the continuity of learning across grade levels.

The nature and purpose of the research study was fully discussed with the principal and subsequently, with the school's primary staff prior to initiating the research.

Description of the Classroom and Center Routines

The targeted research classroom was a morning kindergarten class. The class consisted of 22 children with the addition of one more child half-way through the study. There were 11 boys and 12 girls. A major organizational characteristic was the use of centers within the classroom. In this classroom a center was an area in which a limited number of children participated together with a common focus. The following centers were in the classroom: blocks, sand, water, paint, craft, writing, table games, playhouse, books, science, carpet games, listening, and puppets (see Appendix A for the layout of the classroom).

The physical arrangement of the centers did not change throughout the study; however, some of the materials at the centers did change with the themes. Once a center was introduced it was stationary for the entire school year. All of the

reported centers had been in operation for several months prior to the onset of the study.

The allotted time for centers was approximately 50 to 60 minutes per day. This time occurred immediately after the opening large group circle time and ended just prior to recess time, usually from 9:05 to 10:05 a.m. each day. This varied, depending upon special events, fieldtrips, or the length of the opening circle time (see Appendix B for the class timetable).

Immediately prior to the center time, there was a large group circle time that consisted of calendar activities, show and share for four to five children each day, and a theme related lesson or discussion of special events for that day. This language time was teacher-directed and culminated with each child selecting the center where he/she would begin play for that day. The teacher called out each child's name, in a daily rotating order, with the children naming their choice of centers to be recorded by the teacher. There were limits to the number of children at each center. The teacher would indicate if a center were full; if this were the case, the child would then make an alternate choice.

The teacher circulated among the various centers during the hour of center time. The end of center time was marked by the teacher turning off the lights after which the children were given three minutes to clean up. Then the children sat in the large group circle for the post-center sharing time. Here the teacher would comment on some of the interesting activities that she had seen during the

center time and would then ask three or four children to share what they had done during that time.

The classroom themes changed on a monthly basis. The themes for April were space and Easter while the themes for May were the farm and spring. In order to introduce each theme and familiarize the parents with the activities, the teacher sent home newsletters approximately every two weeks (see Appendix C for two examples of the teacher's newsletter to the parents). Each of the themes usually included one or two fieldtrips; the space theme was introduced with a fieldtrip to the local Space Science Center in early April while the farm theme involved a trip to a local dairy at the beginning of the theme and a trip to a local farm at the end of the theme. Typically, the teacher was not able to control the exact date for scheduling a fieldtrip due to the outside agency's tight schedule.

The class had a teacher's aide on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. There was usually a parent volunteer in the classroom on the other three mornings of the week. Their primary role during center time was to supervise the craft center.

## Description of the Data Sources

Target children. The target girl for the study, Kaitlyn, was 5 years, 9 months old. She was a middle child with a 10-year-old sister and a 2-year-old brother. She had attended playschool the year prior to kindergarten and had just started to play on a soccer team. Her father worked full-time and her mother was at home.

The target boy for the study, Michael, was 5 years, 6 months old. He was a middle child with a 7-year-old brother and a 2-year-old brother. He had attended an afternoon craft program prior to kindergarten and had just started to play on a soccer team. His father worked full-time and his mother was at home during the day but did work part-time on some evenings and weekends.

The two targeted children were similar in age, position in the family, involvement in extra-curricular activities, and home environment. Their classroom teacher viewed these two children as average to above average in verbal ability while average in other academic areas. There were some differences with Michael having less developed fine motor skills while the teacher rated Kaitlyn as being slightly more advanced overall. Nonetheless these children were similar on a large number of important variables.

The parents of both children were fully informed of the nature and purpose of the study; they were interested in the area of child development and lent support to the study by meeting with the researcher.

Teacher. The teacher had been teaching for eleven years, ten of those years in a kindergarten classroom. She was a full-time teacher for the first seven years and then taught half-time for the following four years. She had taught in a variety of schools; this was her first year in the study school. The teacher was fully informed of the purpose, the methodology, and the manner in which the data was to be used.

## Collection of Data

Written permission for participation in the study was obtained from the parents of the targeted children (see Appendix D for the consent form for the major participants), from the parents of the other classroom children (see Appendix E for the consent form for the minor participants), and from the teacher (see Appendix F for the consent form for the teacher). These consent forms included a description of the nature and purpose of the study. The teacher and the parents were encouraged to express any concerns that they might have before, during, and after the study was conducted.

The teacher was asked to behave as naturally as possible and to enter into the play as she normally would on a typical school day. The children were told by the teacher to carry out their activities as usual. The teacher instructed the teacher's aide and the parent volunteers not to withdraw children from a center that the researcher was videotaping. The parents of the targeted children were asked to behave as naturally as possible and to prepare their children for the study by discussing the process with their children prior to the videotaping.

Data was gathered by use of observations, interviews, logs, and fieldnotes.

Observations

The researcher's role was as a passive-participant observer during the center time in the classroom. The activities which displayed sociodramatic play were recorded by video equipment. The video camera was operated by the researcher and followed the target child during the center time period.

Each target child's center time activities were monitored for a two week period. Every time the child engaged in sociodramatic play, it was recorded by use of video. The pre-center circle time interaction that led to a specific center or peer group choice and the post-center circle sharing time were all monitored and in many cases videotaped so as to be aware of all areas that could influence a child's language.

The video monitor, video cassette recorder, and other equipment were kept in one corner of the room behind the teacher's desk which was removed from the specific centers. However, the camera was in close proximity to the center where the target child was playing. The obtrusive equipment was therefore kept out of the way of the children while only the camera, on a tripod with a hook-up cord to the video cassette recorder, was in close proximity to the centers. The researcher would set up the camera to video the center that the target child had chosen, leave the camera in a stationary position, and then remove herself to the corner of the classroom where the video monitor was located. If the target child changed centers, the researcher would then move the camera to that center. Thus, the

researcher operated in a fashion that caused her to intrude as little as possible in the ongoing activity of the classroom.

The researcher kept notes on her observations while viewing the video monitor and listening through headphones hooked up to the video cassette recorder located in a corner of the classroom. Annotations were made regarding: the time of onset of the sociodramatic play as per the video cassette recorder time counter, the children involved in the play, the topic of the play, examples of how language was used, materials used, teacher involvement, and teacher statements. These annotations provided an outline for the researcher's reflections later in the day as well as a summary of the videotaping for that day.

One Omni, Sony Electret Condenser ECM-270, microphone was placed in the blocks center and another was placed in the playhouse center. These remained stationary throughout the study. A shotgun microphone was used for other centers and for group time. The shotgun microphone was mobile and was moved with the camera when the target child was not in the blocks or playhouse centers. The target child wore a wireless microphone, TOA Wireless Microphone Model WNE, which was attached to a chest harness. The classroom children all had turns wearing the wireless microphone during the large group circle time before and after the center time; in this way the novelty of someone wearing the microphone soon diminished. Only the target child wore the microphone during the center time. This did not appear to intrude in the play; the target child's self-consciousness diminished after the first few days of data collection. A wireless

microphone was deemed appropriate considering the poor acoustics in a kindergarten classroom and the need for high quality audio-input when verbatim language transcription was required.

Audio-input was videotaped on two channels simultaneously by the video cassette recorder; the wireless microphone worn by the target child was on channel two while either the omni or the shotgun microphone was on channel one. Concealment of the omni and shotgun microphones was not attempted although they were placed in unobtrusive positions. Concealment was not a critical issue because the children readily screened out distractions. This could be attributed to their age and the frequency of visitations by various people to the classroom (see Appendix G for a transcript of a typical play episode).

Interviews with the Teacher

One aspect of data collection was frequent interviews with the teacher. The purpose of the interviews was to clarify issues, to expand on the observations, and to allow the teacher to discuss ideas she thought were critical.

Interviews with the teacher involved discussion of: (a) her views on children's and teacher's language in imaginative/pretend play; (b) the goals/purposes of the centers in terms of time, space, materials, rules, and integration of school subjects; and (c) her role in the children's play, if any. Some of the videotapes as well as entries in the teacher's log were used to facilitate discussion in the interviews. The teacher was interviewed three times throughout the course of the study; these

discussions occurred at the end of the first, second, and fourth weeks and were audio tape recorded.

Teacher's Log

The purpose of the log was to provide an informal means by which the teacher could reflect on the target children's play. The log also provided the researcher with an avenue for posing informal questions to the teacher.

Initially, the teacher was asked to keep a log with brief notes on the theme and goals for the centers as well as to comment on her interaction with the target child's play group for that day. After the first three days the notes on the theme and goals became repetitive and the teacher expressed difficulty in recalling specific interactions with the target child's play group. The log format was changed to the researcher posing questions or queries in the log on the centers as well as on the teacher's input into the play for that specific day. This was done after videotaping each day. The teacher would take the log home to complete before giving it back to the researcher the next morning. This was particularly useful for addressing issues in an informal manner and for providing the teacher with time to reflect on her answers.

## Fieldnotes

The purpose of the fieldnotes (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982; Spradley, 1980) was to provide the researcher with a means to reflect immediately on the activities that she had observed and to record her impressions of the data collected on that day. The fieldnotes consisted of an outline during videotaping and an expansion of this after videotaping.

After each session of videotaping, the researcher immediately wrote notes on her observations and impressions of the data collected on that day. The annotations that were taken while videotaping helped to provide the researcher with a frame of reference. The fieldnotes allowed the researcher to reflect on patterns and anomalies that could be emerging from the data as well as queries that she had regarding these patterns.

By revisiting the data in this way on an ongoing basis, the researcher was encouraged to identify patterns, to raise questions, to synthesize the data, and to record the accumulation of the data in a progressive format.

## Pilot

A pilot consisting of three half days of videotaping was done in a different kindergarten classroom to establish recording procedures. This occurred immediately prior to the onset of data collection. The pilot provided the researcher with experience in observational techniques and the opportunity to

refine videotaping procedures; this was particularly important for the choice and position of the microphones. Data from the pilot suggested the block center (which contained large, differing shapes of blocks and boards) and house center as being the most probable sources of imaginative/pretend play episodes; therefore, microphones were placed in these centers in the research study. The pilot also reminded the researcher to keep the obtrusive video equipment, particularly the video monitor, out of the view of the children. In addition, the data from the pilot indicated that distractions for the children decreased when the researcher removed herself from the video camera as soon as possible after it was set up.

## Research Schedule

The research took place over a five week period from April 21, 1987 to May 25, 1987. Three days were allocated prior to the beginning of the study to familiarize the teacher and students with the researcher and the video equipment. It is often difficult to judge the appropriate acclimatization period; Dollaghan and Miller (1986) suggest that a researcher note a decrease in overt reactions to the researcher and camera by the classroom children. For example, on Day One there were approximately four overt reactions while on Day Three there was only one. This would seem to indicate that the children were acclimatizing.

This class was familiar with videotaping. A Grade six class had done some videotaping of the children prior to the researcher arriving in the school. In addition, the teacher had placed video equipment in the classroom for three to

four days prior to the onset of the study. This prior experience and the decrease in overt reactions in the acclimatization period led the researcher to conclude that the videotaping did not intrude unduly in the activities of the children.

The researcher observed/videotaped the target female child for the first ten school days following the acclimatization period and the target male child for the next ten school days. This yielded only eight days of data for the male due to a fieldtrip and a family holiday (see Appendix H for the data collection timetable). It was believed that a continuous period of observation, ten school days for each child, would provide richer data than an alternating schedule between the children. It was more likely that scheduling the study in this way would capture the expansion and sequence of thematic play. Alternating the days or the children might not allow for a comprehensive look at the play development within a theme.

The classroom themes differed during the data collection for the two target children. Space and Easter were the themes during the target female's data collection while the farm and spring were during the target male's data collection.

The two target children did play together in the same center many times throughout the data collection period; typically this was in the block center. This joint-play data allowed the researcher to observe the interaction between the two children.

The data collected yielded ten days of videotaping for the target female (with three of those days including the target male) and eight days of videotaping for

the target male. There were approximately 230 minutes of data on the target female, 240 minutes of data on the target male, and 80 minutes of data on the target male and female together in joint play (see Appendixes I and J for a summary of the imaginative play data on the target female and the target male).

## Data Analysis Procedures

### Transcription

The researcher transcribed verbal language (verbatim) from the videos taken of the circle and center time in the classroom. The pre and post-circle dialogue was transcribed only if it related to the theme or the centers; dialogue in the centers was transcribed when the children were in imaginative play or discussing their play.

For this study imaginative/pretend play was considered a generic term as it encompassed dramatic, socio-dramatic, and thematic-fantasy play. These are differentiated by the nature of the stimulus: within the real world (dramatic play and socio-dramatic play) or beyond the real world of experience (thematic-fantasy play).

Dramatic play is best described by Smilansky: "The child takes on a role: He pretends to be somebody else...he imitates the person, in action and speech, with the aid of real or imagined objects" (1968, p. 7). This is solitary play where the themes and events are within the realm of the child's experiences (Saltz, 1974).

"Dramatic play becomes socio-dramatic if the theme is elaborated in cooperation with at least one other roleplayer; then the participants interact with each other both in action and verbally" (Smilansky, 1968, p. 7).

Thematic-fantasy play is considered enacting roles and themes not related to one's personal experiences where the source may be literature or film (Saltz, 1974). This may be in group or solitary play.

Non-verbal communication was documented for all transcribed video data of the center time. Ringler and Weber's (1984) categories of nonverbal communication were used for classification purposes. The categories were: (a) vocal sounds or paralinguistics which include pitch, volume, stress, and other factors that go into tone of voice; (b) body movement or kinesics which include explicit gestures, body postures, and facial expressions; and (c) the use of personal space or proxemics which include distance and facing (p. 53).

The use of materials was documented for the transcribed video data. The interviews with the teacher were also transcribed.

## The Matrix

For synthesis of data Mehan's (1979) recursive rule techniques were used to generate a matrix that encompassed the data. He describes it as follows:

> The method begins with a small batch of data. A provisional analytic scheme is generated. The scheme is then compared to other data, and modifications are made in the scheme as necessary. The provisional analytic scheme is

constantly confronted by "negative" or "discrepant" cases until the researcher has derived a small set of recursive rules that incorporate all the data in the corpus. The result is an integrated, precise model that comprehensively describes a specific phenomena, instead of a simple correlational statement about antecedent and consequent conditions. (p. 21)

The researcher viewed all the videotapes and reviewed her fieldnotes and reflections on each of the video days. The highlights from all the data were recorded. Then the researcher chose three highly verbal and imaginative episodes in the center time that included the target female with a play group, the target male with a play group, and the two of them together in a play group. These three episodes were viewed with observations recorded under the headings 'What are the target children trying to achieve?' and 'How do they achieve their goals?'.

Verbal strategies that the children conveyed in their imaginative play were identified as well as the purpose for each of these strategies. A matrix of purposes and strategies was developed; each of these categories was defined. The video data transcribed from the center time was coded using the matrix; an utterance was coded first with a purpose and then with a strategy. The rules and procedures for coding with the matrix were documented (see Appendix K for coding rules).

It was deemed important to judge the researcher's facility in noting patterns as well as her consistency in judging recurring patterns within the data analysis. Because validation of these behaviors with an outside source should lead to a

more accurate analysis of the data, a reliability check was done on 25% of the data with the researcher's thesis advisor.

The matrix was revised so as to allow for agreement between the researcher and the outside source on the categories of the matrix. This involved discussing discrepancies and refining definitions so that the model encompassed all behaviors. In this manner all the research data dealing with imaginative play from centers could be coded within the matrix. The researcher then coded all transcribed video data from the center time using the matrix (see Appendix L for a sample of a coding transcript).

The teacher's log and interviews as well as the researcher's fieldnotes were reconsidered to identify consistent influences which contributed to the play. The researcher had consistently noted the behavior of the teacher, the use of materials in the play centers, and the type of centers used during the videotaping.

## Summary

This study was designed to examine how language is used in imaginative/pretend play by two children, in a peer group. The children, who were from families with middle socio-economic status, were verbal in their play and had been described as successful by their teacher. In order to facilitate this study, videotapes, logs, fieldnotes, and interviews were used.

The pilot provided an opportunity for the researcher to experiment with different microphones and their positions, and to refine the recording procedures.

The acclimatization period, in the research classroom, helped to familiarize the teacher and children with the researcher and the video equipment so as to not upset the normal ecology of the classroom.

The data collected yielded approximately 230 minutes of data on the target female, 240 minutes of data on the target male, and 80 minutes of data on the target male and female together. Data analysis procedures involved transcribing and documenting the verbal and non-verbal language in center time that involved imaginative play. A purpose-strategy matrix was developed to account for the data. The data was coded using the matrix and then a reliability check was completed on 25% of the data.

Other influences which contributed to the play were noted from the videotapes, the teacher's log, the interviews with the teacher, and the fieldnotes. These influences were discussed under three general areas.

# Chapter Four

## Analysis and Discussion of the Data

This chapter discusses the findings of the research in light of the research question. The analysis of the data culminated in the development of a purpose/strategy matrix. Each of the purposes and strategies are discussed as well as influences on the play. A summary concludes this chapter.

### Research Question

How do two children, identified by their teacher as using extensive language during imaginative play, employ language during this play?

### Source of Data Collection

Data was collected from two types of sources:

1. The majority of the research information was obtained from video recordings of the center time in the classroom and of circle time before and after this center time. This data was analyzed for purposes and strategies of language use during imaginative play.

2. Information was also obtained from the interviews with the teacher and from her log. This data was analyzed to identify center-related influences on the children's play.

## The Purpose/Strategy Matrix

General themes emerged from the analysis of the data on the videotapes. These general themes involved verbal and non-verbal language used by the target children for different purposes and strategies. Mehan's (1979) recursive rule technique generated a matrix of general purposes and strategies. This matrix was developed so as to encompass all the data available in the videotapes.

Purposes were identified by judging the children's apparent intent during play. Strategies were identified by studying the means through which the children achieved their purposes. The strategies involved what the children did in their play while the purposes involved what the children wanted to achieve. The strategies used by the children served several purposes.

### Purposes

An outstanding characteristic of each target child's talk during dramatic play was the degree to which the talk was goal directed. This goal directedness was analyzed and labelled as purpose. The purposes related to the children's apparent intent in using language during play, that is, what they wished to achieve. The data indicated that the target children's language served three purposes: I. to advance the play, II. to control the play, and III. to encourage the group dynamics. A fourth category, unknown, was included to avoid errors through forced choice.

Purpose I. To advance the play. This purpose includes intents such as: to initiate the play, to continue the play, to maintain the imaginative element, and to help the role development. It involved the "carrying on with play" that is observed during typical, evenly evolving play activity.

The target children seemed to employ language for this purpose to a great extent. Kaitlyn particularly would try many different measures to keep the play theme progressing. For example, when two children were fighting about the blocks Kaitlyn said, "Hey there's blocks over there...Earth, earth calling earth... I'm the commander. Hurry, come, blast off into space, on Mars. Something's wrong with the controls. They exploded up." She often threw out new ideas to the other children so as to keep the play advancing if it had stagnated or to distract them if there was a dispute; in this manner she was able to motivate the other players to continue the play. Michael also advanced the play in this capacity but not to the same extent that Kaitlyn did.

Purpose II. To control the play. The second purpose involved the following intents: to establish/maintain control over the direction of the play and to establish/maintain ownership. This purpose was very evident in the target children. These children, who appeared to have the greatest facility with oral language, tended to have more control over the direction of the play than the non-target children did in the play groups. Typically this appeared to be characteristic of a leader in the play groups. An example of this occurred when

the children were arguing over who had magic powers. Michael used an object to his advantage for gaining control when he said, "No, no, only the magic phone and I have it. That's mine. I gave myself more power."

Control of the play was observed at two levels: an elementary level of giving ultimatums and having disagreements, and at a more sophisticated level of influencing with language or through use of negotiation skills. Kaitlyn and Michael both seemed to operate at the latter level for the majority of the time when seeking control over the play. Kaitlyn appeared to be more successful at using negotiation than Michael was during the period studied.

Purpose III. To encourage group dynamics. This purpose involved the following: to integrate others (by keeping them informed of all the 'happenings' in the play group), to cooperate with other players, and to accommodate other players.

Kaitlyn seemed to have this purpose in mind more than Michael did in the play groups; she appeared to be more concerned that the play progress and apparently needed all the players to participate in order to accomplish this end. Most of the time Kaitlyn was very good at accommodating other players while maintaining her critical role in the play. This was often accomplished through her quick inventions in the play. For example, the children were playing house ship in the blocks and Kaitlyn announced, "I'm gonna be the Mom." Another girl made

eye contact with Kaitlyn and stated "I'm the Mom." Kaitlyn replied, "OK, I'm the teenager. Pretend I wasn't feeling good."

Purpose IV. Unknown. This category included data from the videos where the purpose for the action or the language was not understood. It was included to avoid distortion of the other categories by inclusion of non-specific data. There were very few observations made under this category.

Summary of purposes. The four purposes I. to advance the play, II. to control the play, III. to encourage group dynamics, and IV. unknown, offered an attempt to explain the intent of the children. The children employed language in the form of different strategies which seemed to have single or multiple purposes for the children's participation in the play.

## Strategies

The children used a range of strategies in order to achieve their purposes. Three general strategies emerged from the data analysis. All three strategies served several purposes. That is, there was no direct correspondence between a specific purpose and strategy. Language was the means by which the children were able to employ these different strategies. The strategies grouped as follows: A. to give or to solicit information, B. to add significant ideas for theme and role development, C. to manage interaction with or for other players, and D. unknown.

Strategy A. To give or to solicit information. This strategy enabled the children to elaborate on the play theme or to develop the plot. It involved adding details or exploring the topic and materials of the current focus. It may have shown minor creativity and leadership but did not prompt significant changes in play development. Strategy A was an enrichment of the status quo.

This strategy, dealing with information giving, was the most prevalent of all the strategies in the coding analysis. It seemed to be important for the players to constantly talk about what they were doing; this enabled the group to be involved in the development of the roles and the theme of the play. For example, Kaitlyn told a new player, "We're playing castle." She also continuously announced her activities, "I will just go to my spaceship and get some."

The children continually labelled materials and space to make the other children aware of a real object or space changing to an imaginative one; this seemed to add concreteness to the play, with the materials and the space helping to guide the play. For example, when Michael was playing at the sand center he said, "Hey, I'm digging underground for gold." At the block center Kaitlyn pointed to a shelf and said, "I'm going to sleep on the bunkbed." This was a method of keeping others informed of one's play ideas as well as helping the play to progress. It also appeared to be essential for the children to announce their changes or substitutions. For example, Kaitlyn was playing spaceship with two other children in the blocks and announced, "I'm making a cabin for me."

The children recurrently defined or set limits in the play by defining what an object or space was and was not, as well as determining who was and was not allowed to enter the play. This provided clarification for the group and allowed the play to advance. It also provided control for the group. When one of the children announced the limits of a space or object, it would establish ownership that exerted control in the play group. The following excerpts are examples of this type of dialogue: "That's not the magic phone.", "This is our wall."(points to blocks), This is the dungeon." Once a child asked if she could join the block play and Kaitlyn replied, "Sure if you are a Martian."

Markers (Howes & Unger, 1989) or specific carrier phrases played a significant role in relaying information to the other players. These helped to introduce the imaginative world , to confirm the imaginative world, to change the direction of the plot, to add new elements to the play, and to manipulate for control. Kaitlyn tended to use "Pretend...", "Pretend that..." or "You didn't know but..." while Michael used "Say that...", "Just say...", or "Let's say...". "Pretend" was by far the most common carrier phrase used by all the children in the play groups. These markers seemed to serve three purposes in the play: to help create the plot, to inform others of one's plans, and to confirm that the plot was imaginative. Some examples of this by Kaitlyn are: "Pretend these are magical keys." and "You didn't know but it went out of control and started going down.". Michael also used carrier phrases a great deal in his imaginative play. Some examples are:

"Let's say I put it (the thermostat) just right for you to stay alive." and "Just say you were a good guy queen and I'm the good guy king....".

Confirmation checks with the other players were also important for relaying information. These generally focussed on checking theme and role development. Michael and Kaitlyn seemed to use them routinely as they developed their role and ideas in the play group. Michael, particularly, tagged "right" and "OK" onto the end of many of his sentences. For example, "The trains are not blocked, right?" and "It can come out in the dungeon and bite your head off, OK." Michael seemed to habitually add a confirmation note onto the end of his sentences; there were times that he was actually checking with the other players but usually it appeared to be a non-functional addition. These checks helped to maintain the attention of the other players as the plot developed; this was very important when the play involved more than two players. The confirmation checks with other players were probably also a tool used to achieve the child's needs in a diplomatic fashion.

The rapid speed of transition within a topic or to another topic was observed in the data. It was noted that language enabled the children to make quick transitions or transformations (Fein, 1987) within the development of the plot. Kaitlyn and Michael were particularly adept at this. An example of this occurred at the block center when both Michael and Kaitlyn were there playing dungeon: Kaitlyn said, "You guys were laughing like crazy. You weren't looking but I got out."...Michael replied, "You don't know where the key is. We have the

key."...Kaitlyn said, "But I picked the lock with something. By magic I can open it - cause I have magic."...Michael said, "By mistake I put electricute bars and you couldn't break down."...Kaitlyn replied, "I made them disappear for real life."

Non-verbal language was observed to be important in relaying information in the play groups; vocal sounds, body movements, and personal space were noted in the data analysis. Vocal sounds which were defined as non-language vocal behavior have been included as non-verbal language within the strategy category. Vocal sounds played a significant role in cuing other players when the children were in and out of role, as well as helping to maintain the role. Kaitlyn used a robot voice in this manner when the children were playing robots in space. In her normal voice she said, "Pretend the lights went out." Then in a robot voice she said, "No lights, the stars ran out. It's daytime. We better go to sleep." Next she again used her normal voice to add, "At daytime we go to sleep." This was her way of using vocal sounds to cue the other children when she was in and out of role.

Stress, pitch, and intensity were also useful in conveying information to the other players. For example, when Kaitlyn was playing hospital she used an urgent voice to help the roleplaying. She said, "His temperature is going down, it's getting up to 100. He's very sick. He's gonna die - I know it. You have to help us." By using her voice in this manner she was able to support her imaginary role and develop the play scenario at the time.

Vocal sounds also helped to transform an object or space into an imagined object. For example Kaitlyn, when playing spaceship, used vocal sounds to simulate a computer. She said, "You don't know - we have little computers to see you... Nu Nu Nu. We're seeing what you are doing through our computers. Nu Nu Nu." Vocal sounds helped her to roleplay with an imagined object and to pass this information on to the other players.

Body movements or actions were useful to illustrate meaning while a child was verbally interacting with other children in the play. Kaitlyn would often walk like a robot if she were playing that part. Michael pretended to open a door (in the wall of blocks depicting the spaceship) so as to illustrate that he was walking in space. Eye contact was a useful tool to relay information and to establish ownership or control. This was typically used when a child was stating what was his or her property or role in the play.

Maintenance or identification of personal space was not observed as a critical aspect in the development of the play. It did not appear to be a predominant factor in this classroom other than everyone claimed some space in order to carry on their role in the play.

In summary, Strategy A involved the most dominant use of language employed by target and non-target children in their imaginative play. The labelling of materials and space, the limits of players and space, the carrier phrases, the confirmation checks, the quick transitions, and the use of non-verbal

cues, all allowed the children to use language as a tool for giving or soliciting information to the group.

Strategy B. To add significant ideas for theme and role development. This strategy allowed the children to make a significant shift in the theme development; it involved adding a meaningful component of information or changing the role of self or others in relation to the theme. This is in contrast to the minor variation in maintenance of the status quo in Strategy A. The use of this strategy by the target children appeared to give evidence of their creative thought and ability to integrate new ideas into the present setting. This strategy also allowed the children to change the direction of the play significantly; this could involve giving self or other children an identity that would greatly change all the subsequent theme development. For example when playing space and Martians, Kaitlyn said, "I turned her into a human I hope you know."

This strategy appeared to be evidence of divergent thinking and leadership when a child had the ability to move from the present progression of ideas in a significant manner. Kaitlyn used this type of dialogue consistently throughout her play. Some examples are: "Astrol gave me a new energy cell so I grown again."; "It splatter something called water in your face. It shut you off because we were robots...when water splashes in your face you shut off." Michael also used this strategy throughout his play. Examples of this include: "We put you in the dungeon and we could turn it any degree and we turn it up to that number. You

would be sweating hot OK....Let's say you were dying in sweat."; "Let's say now it turned into a stone planet....This is where the devil lives."

Verbal language appeared to be the essential ingredient in the development of creative ideas in an imaginative play situation. The level of creativeness varied with the children in the play groups. Generally, Michael and Kaitlyn tended to show leadership by contributing more development and embellishment of the plot than did the other players. These leaders tended to do more expanding, creating, and re-directing of the plot. For example, Michael, when playing a farmer talking to his wife about the baby, said, "Just remember, don't let her touch the hay models that I won from hay racing."; Kaitlyn, when playing a Queen calling the servant on the telephone, said, "Pretend there was a red light that blows that up with yellow spots all over it. That meant I wanted something."

Verbal language was used to spark progression when the plot stagnated. For example, Kaitlyn said, "Pretend by accident you pushed the button for the dragon.", while Michael said, "Let's say we're robots...I am a farmer robot." and "Let's say there was a fire in the barn." Kaitlyn and Michael were very good at adding a creative imaginative element to the development of the play.

Strategy B stood out as a use of language employed by only a few children in the imaginative play groups. It was used to the greatest extent by the target children while some of the other children occasionally used this strategy. It seemed to be a more creative use of verbal language than the informative strategy A.

Strategy C. To manage interaction with or for other players. This strategy involved leadership and assertiveness where a child responded to others and directed the responses of others to facilitate involvement of all participants. This could have included allowing others to 'win' or directing others so as to advance their role in a specific way. Negotiation and mediation of conflicts, offers to cooperate on certain conditions, making ultimatums, and expressions of ownership were considered under this heading.

Michael and Kaitlyn used this strategy more than other children did in their play groups; managing interaction between children seemed to indicate a quality of leadership. The ability to control or direct the sequence of the play was characteristic of the child who used language the most effectively (in both quantity and quality of dialogue). Since a child's facility with oral language seemed to determine his/her control over the direction of the imaginative play, it was not surprising that Michael and Kaitlyn appeared to be leaders in their play groups.

A leader seemed to be essential in the development of the imaginative play. Often in a group of four there were two leaders - usually with separate followers. If Kaitlyn and Michael were in the same play group, they were both leaders in the development of the plot. They did not necessarily play together; rather, they appeared to need a follower to dictate to or to direct. Negotiation between the two leaders was mandatory if the play was to advance. Without negotiation the play would break into two separate play groups. An example of negotiation happened when the children were playing castle. Michael said, "No, let's pretend

it made you bad magic." Kaitlyn said, "No, I'm pretending it make me good magic." Michael replied, "No, it made you bad magic. And if you phoned on it (a telephone) again, it makes you good magic and you're back to yourself OK."

Both Kaitlyn and Michael tended to use regulatory language within the play group on a consistent basis, such as "Don't do that.", and "Use the....". The use of this type of language is one way of managing the group in a controlling manner. This could be characteristic of a leader who uses language in a directive manner without being a 'bully' and has lots of creative ideas to pass on to the group. These ideas seemed to distract the other players from the realization that someone else was controlling their play.

The leaders seemed to be able to use their language easily to change their role in the play when the role did not suit them. This was not as easily achieved by the followers who often tended to complain rather than access a change through language. Negotiation skills and the ability to influence others with language were displayed more frequently by the typical leaders (Michael and Kaitlyn). All the players influenced others to achieve their own needs; this seemed to operate at two levels. At one level the interaction took the form of ultimatums or disagreements such as, "No, I want...." or "I won't be your friend." At another level the interaction involved negotiation or manipulation of the play through language. An example of this happened when the children were playing dungeon. Kaitlyn said, "Pretend by accident you pushed the button for the dragon to come in." and Michael replied, "No, he's under my powers cause... he takes my

orders." Michael and Kaitlyn were very good at manipulating the play development to suit their needs. This was usually accomplished through their use of creative language.

Occasionally the leaders demonstrated a creative method of accommodating the other players and negotiating roles. For example, Michael and Kaitlyn were playing king and queen when another girl wanted to enter the play and be the queen. So Kaitlyn said, "She's the servant." Michael, in trying to prevent a dispute, said, "Uh Uh, she's the first queen and you're the second queen." The leaders were very adept at using their language to bring other children into the play as well as in attempting to accommodate the needs of these children. Another example of this happened when the children were fighting about the division of blocks and Kaitlyn said, "Hey why don't two people share a spaceship."

Oral language competency seems to allow a child the means to more readily manage the play; it allows him/her the tool to immediately change a situation to satisfy his/her needs. Kaitlyn easily controlled the play through her injection of new ideas. For example, she said, "This is our magic light, we should never touch it or it won't be magic." Another child said, "Hey I touched it." to which Kaitlyn replied, "No you have to hold your whole hand on it if you want it not magic." She carefully manipulated the plot (through language) so that she was still in control.

Strategy C also involved the use of verbal language to secure the child's own needs or wants in the play group. The children who had a greater facility with

oral language could influence and control through negotiation most of the time while other children who were not as well versed tended to deal more with ultimatums. Children who could use their language to accomplish many different purposes seemed to emerge as leaders of the play.

Strategy D. Unknown. This strategy involved utterances in the data analysis that did not fit into the above mentioned categories as well as the use of language that was not interpretable. It was included so as to not force the data; very few utterances were observed under this category.

Summary of strategies. The strategies, A. to give or to solicit information, B. to add significant ideas for theme and role development, C. to manage interaction with or for other players, and D. unknown, summarize how the target children employed language in their imaginative play.

## Purpose-Strategy Matrix Summary

The purpose-strategy matrix was developed to encompass all the data available in the videotapes. Table 1 illustrates this matrix.

Table 1

Purpose-Strategy Matrix

| PURPOSE | STRATEGY | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | A. Give or solicit information | B. Add significant ideas for theme and role development | C. Manage interaction with or for other players | D. Unknown |
| I. Advance the play | | | | |
| II. Control the play | | | | |
| III. Encourage group dynamics | | | | |
| IV. Unknown | | | | |

In summary the language of the target children during play included three general purposes achieved in varying degrees by three identifiable strategies. These purposes and strategies relate directly to the research question which was: How do two children, identified by their teacher as using extensive language during imaginative play, employ language during this play? In answer to this question, children employ language to advance the play, to control the play, and to encourage group dynamics. They achieve this through giving or soliciting information, adding significant ideas for the theme and role development, and managing interaction with or for other players (see Appendix M for the operational definitions of the matrix categories).

## Non-target Children

The non-target children appeared to display all the purposes and strategies that the target children did. It was the researcher's impression that the majority of non-target children did not use their oral language in the same capacity as did the target children. It appeared that the target children were usually the leaders in the play group and used oral language more than the others. This was usually for the purpose of advancing and controlling the play through their influence on the theme or their use of negotiation skills.

Strategy A, to give or to solicit information, seemed to be the most prevalent of all the strategies employed by the non-target children as well as the target children. Carrier phrases and vocal sounds also seemed to be important in the play of the non-target children.

## Influences on the Play

There were influences which acted as a facilitating factor on the play. These were not a direct focus of the study but it was found through the teacher's log and interviews as well as observation of the classroom videos that these influences had a direct impact on the children's play. The materials, the centers, and the teacher all influenced the development of imaginative play in this classroom.

The Materials

Objects or materials were important in the development of the play. Usually the children constructed or played with the materials first (whether it was blocks, sand, water or clothes) and maintained dialogue at the same time. This usually involved developing ideas and labelling space. The movement of the materials helped to develop the plot; an initial idea would often be thrown out to the group, then movement of materials would happen, and then there would be discussion for expansion of the plot. For example, the blocks gave structure to the farm; the blocks which represented the walls were important for organizing the space for the play.

There were times when a concrete object seemed to be needed as a tool to substitute for the imagined one. For example, Kaitlyn pointed to imaginary spaceship controls for another child to use in the play; this child then got some puzzle pieces to hold so she would have a real object to substitute for the imagined controls as she talked about them. Another time Kaitlyn pointed to some blocks and said, "Pretend these were magical keys."

The play would often be adapted to incorporate a prize material, such as a flashlight or telephone. In one play segment the teacher's flashlight was an important object to a group that was playing spaceship. Typically everyone wanted it; the one with a creative idea usually was able to hold onto it. Kaitlyn picked it up and said, "But I have one of the starlights. This is a starlight. This is the thing I shoot with."

The Centers

It was the impression of the researcher that the block center generated the most imaginative play language in this classroom. This block center contained many large blocks of varying shapes as well as some different lengths of boards. The sand center was next with a high level of imaginative play language, then the house, the puppet, and the water center. This possibly could be related to the time in the school year that the data was collected and the monthly classroom themes. During one of the interviews with the teacher she said, "At the beginning of the year you don't see as much language in blocks or sand. Kids will be standing beside each other and just playing. But at this time of year they are interacting. It becomes almost more a part of those kinds of centers than the craft or writing (centers) because they are doing it by themselves."

It was also the researcher's impression that water play seemed to involve less dialogue between the children than was observed in the block, sand, house or puppet centers. There appeared to be more manipulation of objects in the water center than interaction between the children.

The Teacher

The teacher was able to set the imaginative theme in the classroom. This was particularly noted in the pre- and post-center circle discussions. For example, during a show and share time, she suggested, "A magic farm might have a unicorn

on it." as a way of tying a child's show-and-share toy into the farm theme (from an imaginative point of view). She also encouraged imaginative play for the whole group by highlighting (in the post-circle time) certain imaginative play activities that she had witnessed during the center time. For example, she asked Kaitlyn and another child to tell about their boat play in the blocks and then said to the circle of children, "They caught lots of fish and then, this is really using their imagination, they turned the fishing rods into magic wands to play Cinderella." Another time the teacher (in post-center discussion) said, "And there were spaceships going on in blocks. Kaitlyn, did you build a spaceship"? Kaitlyn replied, "We were Martians." The teacher then said, "Michael was deciding at the sand that there may be dinosaurs on other planets.... Were there any dinosaurs on Mars"? Kaitlyn replied, "No." Then the teacher said, "Must have been a different part of Mars that Michael was on."

The teacher attempted to add imaginative elements during the center time. At one point she asked Kaitlyn, "What are you doing"? Kaitlyn replied, "We are making a stew." The teacher then asked, "Is it a magic stew"? to which Kaitlyn replied, "We're making magic stew to lift us off the ground." By simply introducing an imaginative word into the play the children easily expanded upon it. This teacher appeared to place a high priority on the development of imaginative language.

The teacher had an influence on the play through the materials that she selected for the centers. At the beginning of the farm theme, numerous farm toys

had been placed in the block center; after two days of center play the teacher removed most of the farm toys from this center. She felt that having too many toys there did not encourage creative play with the blocks.

The teacher also had an influence on the disputes and exchanges between the children. She would try to promote cooperative play wherever possible. For example, she said, "I think you should have one big farm and share the toys." Another time the children asked the teacher for permission to use the flashlight, she gave permission and said, "It is just for seeing where you need to go in space."; with this type of intervention she encouraged cooperative play and gave new ideas to the children.

The teacher encouraged the children to try different centers and roles. The post-center circle discussions by the teacher probably influenced future play by encouraging other children to try the roles that were highlighted in these discussions. She also kept a daybook of the centers where each child would start the day. Often she would encourage them to try a different center for some variety in their play.

This teacher allowed time for the imaginative play to develop in the centers (see Appendix B for the class timetable). This class typically had 50 to 60 minutes each day for centers. A shorter play time or a play time divided into two time segments might not have produced such intricate play scenarios as was noted in the data. Moreover, the children might not have had the time to progress past play with materials and on to imaginative play.

## Summary of Influences on the Play

The observed influences that impacted the play of the children were the materials, the centers, and the teacher. In this classroom it was these three areas that seemed to influence the imaginative play. The materials in a center as well as specific centers had an indirect influence on the imaginative play while the teacher seemed to have a more direct influence on this type of play.

## Summary

The research question that guided the analysis of the data was: How do two children, identified by their teacher as using extensive language during imaginative play, employ language during this play? This chapter discussed the analysis of the data as it was presented in the form of a purpose-strategy matrix. The purposes involved the children's apparent intent in using language during play while the strategies dealt with the means through which the children achieved their purposes.

The purposes, I. to advance the play, II. to control the play, III. to encourage group dynamics, and IV. unknown, attempted to explain the reasons behind the language used by the target children in their imaginative play. The strategies, A. to give or to solicit information, B. to add significant ideas for theme and role development, C. to manage interaction with or for other players, and D. unknown,

encompassed how the target children employed language during their imaginative play.

There were observed influences on the play of the children; the materials, the centers, and the teacher all appeared to have an impact on the play in this classroom. The teacher in this classroom seemed to have a direct impact on the imaginative play of the children while the materials and specific centers appeared to have an indirect impact on the play.

Chapter Five

## Summary, Conclusions, and Implications

This chapter summarizes the research study. A summary of the collection of the data is presented as well as the major findings, conclusions and implications for educational practices. Additional observations and implications for further research are also considered.

### Summary of the Study

This study was designed to examine how two children, identified by their teacher as using extensive language during imaginative play, employ language during this play. Data was collected in a kindergarten classroom through various means: videos of freeplay at center time and the group circle discussions that occurred prior to and after the center time, questions posed in the teacher's log, the researcher's fieldnotes, and interviews with the teacher.

Data analysis procedures involved transcribing and documenting the verbal and non-verbal language in the center time that involved imaginative play. Data from the play center videos was analyzed according to Mehan's (1979) use of recursive rules. Purposes and strategies of language were identified and a purpose-strategy matrix was developed to account for the data. The data was coded using the matrix and then a reliability check was completed. The language

employed by the children during imaginative play involved three general purposes achieved in varying degrees by three identifiable strategies.

Information regarding influences on the play was summarized from the log, the interview data, and the fieldnotes. These influences were discussed under three general areas.

## Conclusions and Implications for Educational Practices

### Imaginative Play - Conclusions

The imaginative play findings of the study were presented in the form of a purpose-strategy matrix. The purposes encompassed the apparent intent of the children in using language during the play while the strategies involved the means through which the children achieved their purposes. The information included in the matrix confirms the descriptions offered by Levy (1984) and Yawkey and Hrncir (1982).

Purposes. Purpose I, to advance the play, included initiating and continuing the play, maintaining the imaginative element, and helping the role development. This was an essential purpose for the children of the play group to have in mind if the play was to progress. A variety of strategies could be drawn upon to promote this purpose within the play.

The second purpose, to control the play, involved establishing or maintaining control over the direction of the play. Many times this seemed to include a desire for ownership of the activities. The children who had the greatest facility with oral language tended to have more control over the direction of the play and became leaders in the play groups.

Purpose III, to encourage group dynamics, included integrating others, cooperating with other players, and accommodating other players. This purpose was observed more readily in the data of one of the target children. This could have been a reason that her play groups seemed to sustain a topic for a lengthy period of time.

The range of purposes achieved by the target children confirms Rubin's (1988) assertions regarding the social effectiveness of children who engage in high frequencies of socio-dramatic play.

Strategies. Strategy A, to give or to solicit information, enabled the children to elaborate on the play theme or to develop the plot; this involved adding details as well as exploring the topic or materials of the current focus in the play. This strategy involved the most dominant use of language employed by all the children in their imaginative play.

Carrier phrases (e.g. pretend, just say, let's say) were used frequently by all children in the study as a prelude to a sentence or new thought on the theme. These served three purposes: to help create the plot, to inform others of one's

plans, and to confirm that the plot was imaginative. It was surprising to see the extent of the carrier phrase use in the imaginative play in this classroom. These markers seemed to be an integral part of this type of play. Perhaps this is due in part to the abundance of information that a carrier phrase carries with such a simple presentation in oral language. These carrier phrases seem to fall under the category of "explicit pretend statements" which are one attribute of good play that helps to frame the overall play development (Sachs, Goldman, & Chaille, 1984).

Confirmation checks (e.g. OK?, right?) were another means of relaying information. The two target children used these addendums to a sentence partially out of habit but also as a means of checking theme and role development, and keeping the attention of the group. Possibly, these addendums could be part of any type of play with this age group.

Non-verbal language (i.e. vocal sounds and body movements) were also noted to carry an important role in relaying information to the group. Vocal sounds, particularly, were of surprising significance with this type of play. Again these carry a lot of information with a minimum amount of language which may explain their extensive use. Similarly Cook-Gumperz and Corosa (1977) found that paralinguistic cues were commonly used to signify fantasy. Such cues carry information that readily allows other children to make inferences on the player's intentions. In the present study body movements and gestures were found to be

of minor significance. Perhaps this could be attributed to the specific classroom themes at the time of data collection.

The rapid speed of transition across themes and the number of re-directions within a play scenario were noteworthy in the data analysis. This occurred often with the target children, who were very competent with their use of oral language. Fein (1987) also reported these transitions by the superb pretend players. She referred to these as transformations and found that the competent players were very good at building on one another's transformational shifts; this was considered bottom-up processing of pretend scenarios. This ability to consolidate ideas and develop or explore new possibilities with other ideas appears to be characteristic of the leaders.

Strategy B, to add significant ideas for theme and role development, allowed the children to make a meaningful shift forward in the overall theme development; it involved adding a significant component of information or changing the role of self or others in relation to the theme. This strategy appeared to be evidence of creative thought, divergent thinking, and leadership. Verbal language is essential in the process of developing creative ideas in an imaginative play situation. This strategy was used mainly by the leaders who tended to do more expanding, creating, and re-directing of the plot. Fein (1987) considered the creative transformation of roles and objects by the competent players to be further evidence of their skill. This also corresponds to Yawkey and

Hrncir's (1982) description of a child's reliance on experience plus creative thoughts.

Strategy C, to manage interaction with or for other players, involved leadership and assertiveness where a player responded to others and directed responses of others to achieve involvement of all participants. Negotiation and mediation of conflicts, offers to cooperate on certain conditions, the use of ultimatums, and expressions of ownership were considered under this heading. The ability to control or direct the sequence of the play was characteristic of the child who used oral language the most effectively (in both quantity and quality of dialogue). It is not surprising that the leaders tended to use this strategy more than the other children in the play groups and as such the ability to manage interaction is a characteristic of a leader.

It is also the researcher's impression that the target children readily used regulatory language in their play. Some of this regulatory language paralleled the findings of Trawick-Smith (1988) and Garvey (1975) regarding children's use of language in effective leadership.

Implications from the Imaginative Play Data

The following suggestions for teaching practices are strictly related to the data from this study. The suggestions are made in relation to general classroom use.

Children with oral language competency are able to both lead and facilitate other children's imaginative play development. The purpose/strategy matrix

provides a heuristic device to consider how language is used in imaginative play in a classroom. The three purposes can focus a teacher's awareness when he/she is observing group play. Some of the purposes could be foregrounded through group discussions or through modelling by the teacher and other children. Most of the strategies can be modelled within a play context in the kindergarten classroom.

A child who achieves purpose I, advancing the play, is a facilitative participant in a freeplay group situation. A leader such as this might have an important role in the classroom. At times the teacher might divide these leaders amongst the play centers.

Purpose II which deals with control does not suggest obvious advantages in facilitating imaginative play. However, control through the use of language at the negotiation level appears to be a more sophisticated and more productive tactic as opposed to control through ultimatum and disagreement.

The third purpose, to encourage group dynamics, is a "noble" purpose and certainly something to be encouraged in play. Leaders who succeed in this purpose, in addition to advancing the play, are special children indeed.

The dominance of strategy A, to give or to solicit information, in the data suggests that it is a valuable fundamental tool to master for imaginative play. Teachers modelling or developing imaginative play skills in a classroom should stress the importance of this skill. A child continually needs to label the materials and space as well as to talk about his/her actions; this use of language makes the

other children aware of one's intentions, clarifies the real from the imaginative, and informs others of changes or substitutions. Apparently this is a basic skill that must be mastered if one is to actively participate in an imaginative play group.

The use of carrier phrases such as 'Pretend' seems also to be a basic skill in imaginative play with this age group. This is a tool that children can use for providing information to the other players in the group in a rather subtle fashion. A teacher could easily model the appropriateness of its use.

Non-verbal language was also very important in the imaginative play of these children. It is an area that provides important information in the play in an easy format. This seems to be an area that most children use readily. Garvey (1977) suggests that non-verbal language serves as an explicit signal.

> For example, how do we know that a child has adopted the role of wicked witch or working woman? She is most likely to announce her new identity to the playmate, but further she is likely to signal the transformation by speaking in a modified voice, by performing some identifying action, or by moving or gesturing in a manner that contrasts with her normal behavior. (p. 83)

Garvey further indicates that pretending tends to be redundantly marked and this is especially important at the transition points to and from the pretend state.

The rapid speed of transition and the number of redirections is worthy of note as a strategy that might provide difficulties for some children. Most children could easily develop the other areas under this strategy but this last area is a rather difficult one to teach. The special needs child with language delays would

have a great deal of difficulty here; however, the other areas within this strategy do not require sophisticated language use. The use of confirmation checks within this strategy seemed to occur too infrequently to warrant direct teaching.

Strategy B, to add significant ideas for theme and role development, tended to exemplify the leaders. Leadership had an important role in imaginative group play. It seemed to be vital to have at least one leader in the group if the play were to progress and evolve. To develop imaginative play skills in a classroom a teacher might distribute the verbal leaders amongst the various play groups. In this way the play would probably not stagnate and the other children would be exposed to a variety of creative ideas for the play development. Fein (1987) suggests that master players "provide glimpses of what pretend play is like when its potential is realized" (p. 283). The competent players could provide rich transformations with the roles and the objects in the play which would be valuable models for other children.

It is important to remember that not all children need to operate at this level of verbal proficiency to participate in imaginative play. In this study there were only a few children who were able to successfully use this strategy. It seems to be an area where a teacher could have an impact on the play. The use of modelling techniques and circle discussions could facilitate the development of this area in some children. This may be a strategy that is the key to having the play progress and to maintaining the interest of the children. However, it is not essential for all children to be sophisticated in this area to have a successful play group.

Strategy C, to manage interaction with or for other players, seems to involve negotiation and the availability of new ideas. This may also involve a more creative and rapid use of language to maintain control for one's self. This may be characteristic of a leader.

Negotiation is a critical component of imaginative/pretend play. In social play of this nature children must jointly agree on many aspects of a fictional world; this is not an easy task. The ability to develop skills in this area could only facilitate a child's overall social competence. Christie (1990) found that time must be allowed in this type of play for social negotiation to occur. His study of 4 and 5 year olds indicated that "during short play periods, many children either do not get involved in play at all or choose to engage in parallel-dramatic play, which does not involve social negotiations and therefore requires much less time than group pretense" (p. 127-128).

Influences on Play - Conclusions

The observed influences that impacted the play of the children centered around the materials, the centers, and the teacher. Objects or materials helped to organize the play space as well as to provide a substitute for an imagined object. The center that typically involved the most imaginative play language was the block center in this classroom. The water play center tended to have less dialogue occur between the children than was observed in other centers.

The teacher had the most direct impact on the children's imaginative play. She continually encouraged the imaginative element by highlighting it during pre and post center circle time and by injecting it into her discussions with the children during center time. She was also very conscious of the 'right' toys for encouraging imaginative creative play.

Teachers wishing to maximize their impact on the development of socio-dramatic play language should consider the type of materials provided in a center, the type of center played at, and the intervention that she will have in the play.

## Implications From These Influences

The materials. The use of materials in imaginative play in a classroom merits attention. Materials available for the children to use immediately upon arriving at a play center allows the children time to engage in conversation for development of ideas. A variety of blocks in the block center, clothes and dishes in the house center, and dinosaurs in the sand center all allowed each child in the play something to do actively while everyone contributed ideas. The child with nothing to do in the play does not continue with that play. This is particularly important for the child who is not as verbally competent or is reserved in an imaginative play situation. The appropriate materials can facilitate participation for this child.

The placement of a new object in a center may spark the play. Something like a flashlight can aid in the development of new ideas. These may require facilitation by the teacher who could provide a model.

In contrast, too many objects at a center limits the imagination since no imaginative substitutions are necessary. This can interfere with the goal of developing good imaginative play and interactive verbal language.

Pellegrini and Galda (1990) suggest that the type of materials used are an important consideration for the age group in which one is attempting to facilitate imaginative language. They feel that functionally explicit props are more appropriate for younger children (2-1/2 to 3-1/2 year old) whereas more ambiguous props are appropriate for the older preschooler (p. 81). This is of value to the kindergarten teacher who is developing a classroom center with materials for this type of play.

The centers. Some centers facilitate the development of imaginative play more than others do. The data from this classroom indicated that the block and house centers were able to facilitate the use of language in imaginative play to the greatest extent. Perhaps the function of the materials or objects in these centers was more ambiguous than in some of the other centers which in turn allowed for more inventive play.

Christie (1990) further suggests that teachers consider including reading and writing materials as would be appropriate in the center. An example of this

would be to include cookbooks, telephone books, newspapers, and so forth in the house center. He feels in this manner literacy activities will become integrated into the children's dramatizations and could possibly facilitate overall literacy.

The teacher. The teacher is the most important influence in most classrooms regardless of the age of the children. Valuing imaginative play, allowing time for its development, and including goals for play in the curriculum are all key elements under a teacher's control.

The most direct method of a teacher's influence on imaginative play can be seen through his/her participation in the children's play. This form of modelling would vary over the course of a kindergarten year. The injection of new ideas into the play either through discussions or as a passerby to the play center can also have a significant influence on the play. Christie (1990) discusses a teacher's influence under the categories of observation and intervention; intervention could be inside or outside the playgroup and should be used sparingly. Many specific factors interact here when one considers such factors as the type of classroom and the time of schoolyear.

The group discussions also permit the teacher to have an impact on the development of imaginative play. In this classroom the teacher highlighted the inventive ideas and the cooperative play. She also was able to make suggestions for the children to try different centers. Thus eventually all children would be placed in a center that was more conducive to developing imaginative play.

Another obvious suggestion would be to have the teacher occasionally distribute the leaders (proficient at developing imaginative play) across groups so that less competent players would benefit from their injection of ideas. This would be an employment of Vygotsky's (1976) zone of proximal development by providing a more capable partner to extend the skills of children further than they would be capable of doing on their own.

The teacher has a direct influence on the imaginative play by the amount of time that is allocated for it in the classroom. Christie, Johnsen, and Peckover (1988) found that preschoolers were more likely to engage in richer imaginative play during longer play times (at least 30 minutes) than shorter ones. The teacher's values regarding imaginative play in the classroom will greatly influence this area.

## Additional Observations

Leadership played an important role in the imaginative play in this classroom. The two target children were leaders in their play groups. They usually contributed significant ideas to the development of the play and assumed primary roles in the expansion and direction of the theme. The two target children were highly verbal and controlled the play with their language; they employed a variety of strategies for a range of purposes. These leadership roles often take time to develop over the course of the school year and perhaps certain children excel in

certain areas such as imaginative play. This was the case with Kaitlyn who according to her teacher, was very quiet at the beginning of the year.

It is important to remember that not everyone needs to be a leader. In this study the majority of children were non-leaders in the play groups. Yet most of these children were able to fully participate in the imaginative play themes. The more verbal children certainly had a higher degree of involvement but all of the children were able to participate to some degree. The old saying that "we can not all be leaders" holds true in this case where the enjoyment and learning associated with the play did not depend upon whether one was a leader or not. Leading and following both have an essential role in play. Trawick-Smith (1988) offers the following insights:

> Never to lead is never to be heard, never to have ideas carefully considered by others, and never to have an impact on the behaviors or thinking of peers. Never to follow, on the other hand, is never to benefit from the ideas of others or be swayed to other's viewpoint. (p. 65)

The leader/follower aspect of imaginative play is of value when one considers the special needs child, particularly the language-delayed child. For this child, who is unlikely to provide leadership, it is important that everyone does not have to be a leader or verbally fluent to participate in group imaginative play. In fact very few children used Strategy B (to add significant ideas for theme and role development) showing limited creative use of language in this classroom's imaginative play centers. The majority of children in this study used Strategy A

(to give or to solicit information) in their imaginative play groups. Perhaps focussing on teaching Strategy A to the language-delayed child would be enough to facilitate his/her participation in the play. Specifically focussing on the use of carrier phrases and informing others of one's actions would certainly enhance a child's role in this type of play. Because pragmatics is a crucial feature of the interactive process, imaginative play would provide an ideal context in which to teach interactive language.

One can only postulate that a child with highly verbal play skills will be able to transfer these skills into the academic areas; specifically that the child's writing and perhaps reading skills will benefit from imaginative play. Viewing the verbal facility of Kaitlyn and Michael, the claims of Pellegrini and Galda (1990) and those of Christie (1990) seem tenable. It would be surprising if these children's verbal effectiveness did not provide an effective foundation for literacy.

## Possible Further Research

Even with the answering of a specific question many other questions remain. Specifically, the data prompt the following questions for later investigation:

1. Is one's language ability in imaginative play related to later academic success in the language arts area?

Is the ability to write creative stories related to one's prior imaginative play experiences? Are reading and oral language capabilities and imaginative play related as well?

2. How does a teacher's value of play in a classroom relate to a child's imaginative play development? How does the teacher influence the development of group imaginative play in the classroom?

3. How do the non-leaders in imaginative play fare with later success in the language arts area? How do these compare with the leaders?

4. Which purposes and strategies are characteristic of non-leader children?

5. Is a specific pattern of purposes and strategies diagnostically significant in the identification of at-risk children?

## Concluding Statements

Children who display leadership in the area of imaginative play incorporate a range of verbal skills that can be described within a matrix of three purposes and three strategies.

The teacher, materials, and context of the classroom also affect the progression of imaginary play. By orchestrating such factors as the distribution of

leaders, the provision of toys, the allotment of time for play, the foregrounding of play innovations, and the creative development of themes the teacher is likely to facilitate the development of play language among her students.

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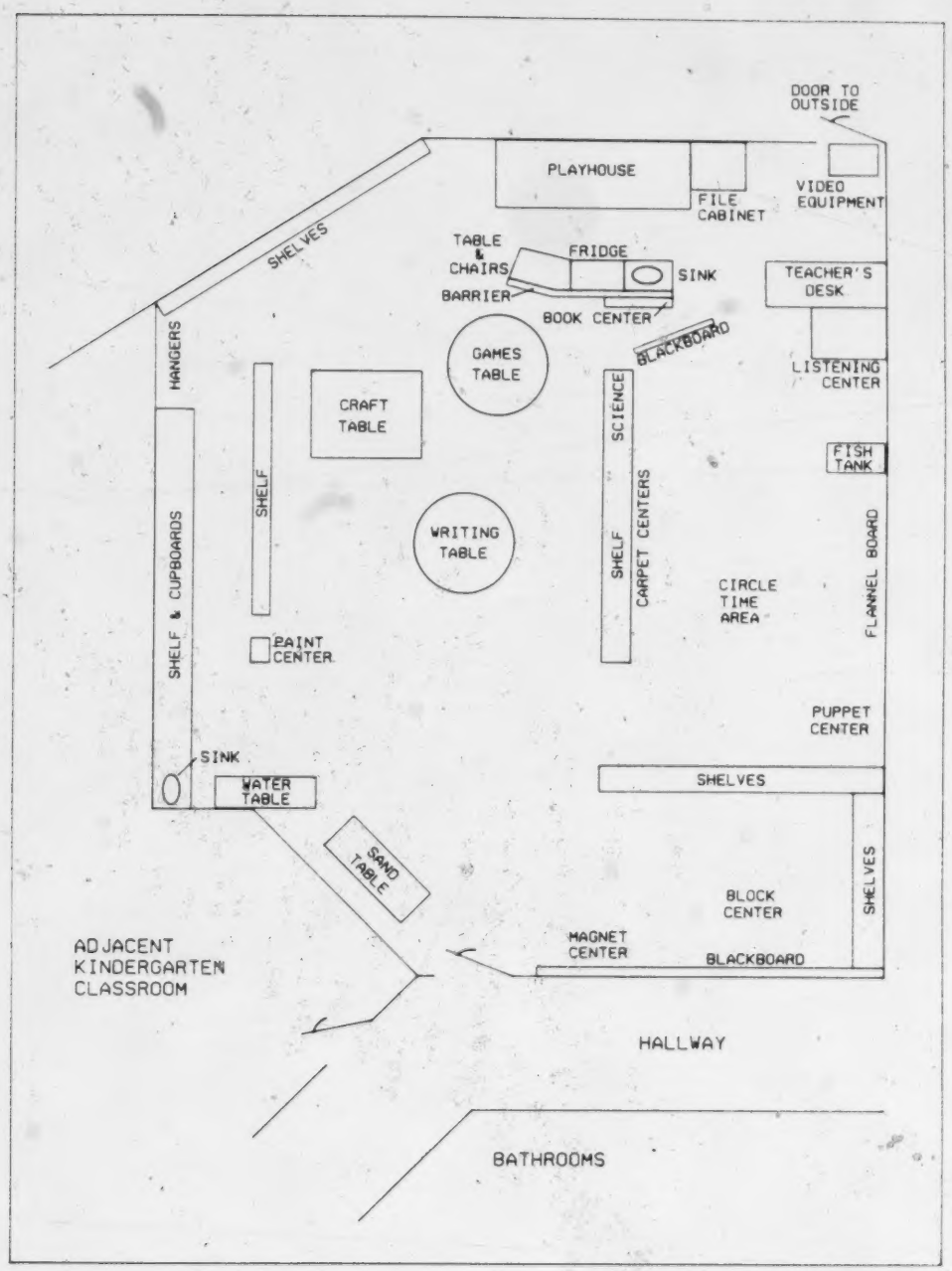
# Appendix A

## Layout of the Classroom



## Appendix B

### Class Timetable

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 8:45-8:55 | Arrival, marking names, shoes | |
| 8:55-9:15 | Large group time | - calendar and weather<br>- show and tell<br>- theme related lesson and special plans for day |
| 9:15-10:05 | Learning Centers | - Self-selected activities and teacher directed centers |
| 10:05-10:15 | Clean-up time | |
| 10:15-10:30 | Recess | |
| 10:30-10:45 | Snack time | |
| 10:45-11:00 | Gym | |
| 11:00-11:20 | Storytime and songs | |

Appendix C

Teacher's Newsletters to Parents

April 15, 1987

Dear Parents:

What a busy two weeks we've had teaching "Sputnik", our little friend from Outer Space, about Easter and especially about bunnies! The Easter Bunny has been playing tricks on us all week and we know he's really going to surprise us tomorrow!

Last week we had an excellent presentation from Barney the Bear on "Safety" and this week we learned the important rules for being a good "Floodbuster". Please continue to reinforce these rules with your child.

On Tuesday, April 21st, we will be having another presentation on Safety, this time from "Banter the Clown". Feel free to join us for this presentation at 9:30 A.M.

Our Field Trip to Lucerne Dairy will be on Thursday, April 23rd, during regular class time and if you are able to help on this trip, please let me know.

Also, please note the enclosed information and permission slip regarding the study Mary Winton will be conducting in our classroom. It is a study that I am most interested in, as I am a firm believer in play as a learning vehicle, especially in regards to language development. We're asking you to return your permission slip as soon as possible so Mary can begin her study. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to call either myself, Mr. , or Mary.

Happy Easter!!!

Sincerely,

April 30, 1987

Dear Parents,

Our school-wide "Fun In the Sun" theme kicks off this Friday, May 1st, with a special "Fun In the Sun Dress-Up Day." We're asking everyone to wear summer clothes- shorts and t-shirts or sundresses, sunglasses and sun hats. Popsicles will be on sale at recess for 25 cents!

Our classroom theme for the month will be "The Farm" and we will be learning about all the fun things you can do on the farm in the sunshine! We will be planting seeds and learning about gardening; making caterpillars, butterflies, and bumblebees; learning about the farmer, farm buildings, machinery, and of course, the farm animals. If the children have any farm animals or farm books please encourage them to bring them for show and share and to add to our farm center. Have a good month and feel free to drop in any time for some "Fun In the Sun!"

Sincerely,

Appendix D

Consent Form for Major Participants

April 10, 1987

Dear Parent:

During April and May there will be a study conducted at Elementary School. Your permission for your child's participation in this study is requested.

The study will investigate how kindergarten children use language in their imaginative play. We hope to learn more about the function of language by examining how children use it within their imaginative/pretend play particularly in play groups.

I am requesting permission for your child to be videotaped during his/her free play time for approximately ten to twelve school days. I will be focussing on the on-going play activity as it happens in child-allowed play groups. I will be doing the videotaping in the classroom myself as well as keeping notes on my observations. After a familiarization period the children should become accustomed to the video equipment so that it will not disrupt the normal flow of activity in the classroom; my intention is to observe the normal play activities of the children. I would also like to interview your child about his/her play at several points throughout the study; this would be done with the aid of an audio recorder. Possibly, I might consult with you about observing your child's imaginative play in the home on one occasion and to discuss his/her imaginative play with you. It would also be helpful for a log to be maintained between the home and myself during the ten to twelve days of videotaping so that I can be aware of follow-up school play happening at home.

The videos will be used for private viewing only with the possibility that they may be used for professional inservice or conferences. The audio recordings from the interviews would be used for private listening only.

The results of this study will be discussed with your classroom teacher and will be available to you at your request. In any written reports or publications, no one including the school will be identified or identifiable.

Your decision whether or not to allow your child to participate will not jeopardize your future relations with the school. If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue participation at any time without prejudice.

I would like to meet with you to fully explain the study before you sign this form. If you have questions, please contact me at 432-3913 (days) or, 452-3598 (evenings) and I will be pleased to discuss the study with you.

Sincerely,

Mary A. Winton, Masters Student
Department of Elementary Education
University of Alberta

---

You are making a decision whether or not you will allow your child to participate. Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to participate. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice after signing this form should you choose to discontinue participation in this study.

_____ _____

Signature of Parent or Legal Guardian Date

Appendix E

Consent Form for Minor Participants

April 10, 1987

Dear Parent:

During April and May there will be a study conducted at Elementary School. Your permission for your child's participation in this study is requested.

The study will investigate how kindergarten children use language in their imaginative play. We hope to learn more about the function of language by examining it within the context of play.

Several children will be targeted for videotaping during their free play time. I will be focussing on several children but I want to study how play and language function within the play group. This presents the possibility that you child may be involved in play with the targeted children and would therefore be on the videotape. The video will be used for private viewing only with the possibility that parts of it might be used for professional inservice or conferences.

In any written reports or publications, no one including the school will be identified or identifiable.

Your decision whether or not to allow your child to participate will not jeopardize your future relations with the school. If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue participation at any time without prejudice.

If you have questions, please contact me at 432-3913 (days) or, 452-3598 (evenings) and I will be pleased to discuss the study with you.

Sincerely,

Mary A. Winton, Masters Student
Department of Elementary Education
University of Alberta

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You are making a decision whether or not you will allow your child to participate. Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to participate. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice after signing this form should you choose to discontinue participation in this study.

_____ _____

Signature of Parent or Legal Guardian Date

Appendix F

Consent Form for Teacher

April 10, 1987

Dear :

I would like to thank you in advance for your participation in this research study. Some background for the study and the methodology are summarized below for your information; there is also an outline of your participation in the study.

Play and language are considered critical in a child's development but it has only been recently that attention has been focussed on the interrelationship between the two areas of development. The evidence to date suggests a complex relationship; however, the exact nature of the relationship is not as yet clearly understood.

Smilansky (1968), in her seminal study on the sociodramatic play of disadvantaged children, was one of the first to focus on play and its relation to language development. She isolated sociodramatic play, a form of symbolic play, as a means of enriching the language and of facilitating the school success of the disadvantaged preschool child. Levy (1984), in discussing Smilansky's work, sees words being used in imaginative play to take the place of reality in four ways: to change personal identity, to change nature of objects, to substitute for action, and to describe situations. In addition, language is involved in planning, developing, and maintaining play. Yawkey and Hrncia (1982) speculated four reasons for the links between imaginative play, communication and creative development:

1. through imaginative play the preschooler defines and assumes roles...various forms of communication are required.
2. imaginative play is linked with communication through child's social involvements...children model and imitate observed actions and words in imaginative play.
3. creative expression combines mental and social thoughts and bridges experiences with roleplaying (e.g. the child relies on experience plus creative thoughts to express a role).
4. concentration involves attention to actions, situation, and ideas developed in pretend play...increased concentration requires extended communication.

Links between play, usually imaginative play, and language have been posited by others; often the reason for these links is reflected by an underlying competence that in turn explains the observed performance relationship between play and

language. McCune-Nicolich and Carroll (1981) refer to the development of language and play as both being influenced by the child's capacity to symbolize. As play matures the role of language becomes critical in the play. McCune-Nicolich and Bruskin (1982) speculated that both symbolic play and language are dependent on the development of underlying representational capacities. Pellegrini (1985) explored the relationship between children's symbolic play and literate behavior which both involve decontextualized language and narrative skills. It is suggested that there are similar mental processes involved in both of these representational processes. Pellegrini cautions against drawing a causal link between symbolic play and literate behavior; at this point the two behaviors coexist. Many language theorists have incorporated the value of imaginative language (but not the role of play) into their structure of language function and development (Halliday, 1969, Tough, 1977).

The present study will attempt to understand the function of language within imaginative play by focussing on the successful child who uses language in his/her play; it will also look at the role of action in the play. The purpose of this study is to describe and analyze how two kindergarten children (and their peer group) use language in imaginative play in their preschool play period. An increase in our understanding of language in relation to play, could give some direction for possible teaching strategies.

The researcher will collect data by observations, interviews, fieldnotes, and logs. Observations of the targeted children will be recorded by video equipment; the teacher will be asked to behave as naturally as possible and, to enter into the play as she normally would on a typical school day. There would also be some videoing of the circle time prior to the play so as to explore the possibility that the teacher's language may influence later play. The targeted children will be interviewed if a specific sequence of the video requires clarification and to recap one of their play episodes while viewing the video. The teacher will be interviewed to discuss her views of play and language as well as goals for the centers. Possibly the parents of the targeted children will be interviewed to discuss their child's imaginative play. The researcher will keep notes of her observations made prior to and during the play time. The parents of the targeted children will be asked to maintain a log between the home and school so that the researcher can be aware of follow-up school play happening at home. The teacher will be asked to keep a log with brief notes on the theme and goals for the centers.

Evaluation of the data will involve transcribing the videos of the play and the audiotapes of the interviews. The data will be analyzed and organized; the results will be compared to current studies of language and play. A graduate student will view two videos and will listen to one interview for the purposes of establishing interrater reliability; it would be valuable for this person to observe once in the

classroom so as to be aware of the setting. The research will be published as a thesis document and as an article in a refereed journal; no individual will be indentificable in any publication. The videos will be used for private viewing only with the possibility that they may be used for professional inservice or conferences. The audio recordings from the interviews would be used for private listening only. The results of this study will be discussed with you and made available to your school.

If at any time there are concerns that may arise, please feel free to discuss them with me initially and then with my thesis advisor,

Sincerely,

Mary A. Winton, Masters Student
Department of Elementary Education
University of Alberta

c.c. , Principal

---

You are making a decision whether or not you will participate in the study. Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to participate. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice after signing this form should you choose to discontinue participation in this study.

_____ _____

Signature of Parent or Legal Guardian Date

# Appendix G

## Sample of a Typical Play Episode

K - Kaitlyn
M - Michael
S - Boy

| RAW DATA | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Verbal Comm. | Non-verbal Comm. | | | |
| | Vocal Sounds | Body Movemt | Persn Space | Use of Material |
| K - O.K. you be the prince. | | | | |
| M - Where is that flashlight gone to? | | | | |
| K - Where's the door? | | | | |
| S - Right here. | | | | |
| M - No you climb over the fence. | | gestures | | blocks |
| K - Hey one of those could be the lock. We could lock one of them up with this. | | points | | |
| M - This is the key. Put it back. | | | | block |
| K - Yeah a big key. | | | | |
| M - We knock on the door. | | | | |
| K - What's the temperature? | stress | eye contact | | |
| S - I don't know the temperature. | | | | |
| M - Five hundred degrees. | | | | |
| K - No this is it. This is where you tell the temperature. It's zero degrees. | | points | | paper on wall |
| M - No it's 400 degrees hot outside. | | eye contact points | | |
| K - Hey we gotta ~~set~~ up the guns. Set up the guns. Kill the giant. Pretend these were magical keys O.K. Pretend we were nice ones O.K. | | eye contact | blocks | |
| M - Bad guy boroooo. | noise | | | |

RAW DATA

| Verbal Comm. | Non-verbal Comm. | | | Use of Material |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Vocal Sounds | Body Movemt | Persn Space | |
| K - O.K. I'll be a good one.<br>We're bad guys. | | | | |
| M - No you're good guy and S____ and me are bad guys.<br>We pretend we capture you. | pitch | eye contact | | |
| K - O.K. pretend I was a princess O.K. | | | | |
| M - Woooo. | noise | | | |
| K - Pretend you threw me in the dungeon.<br>No pretend you made me the servant. | | | | |
| M - No say we put you in the dungeon and we could turn it any degree and we turn it up to that number.<br>You would be sweating hot O.K. | | gestures | | paper on wall |
| K - O.K. | | | | |
| M - And I put a winter jacket on you and you were really cold O.K. | | | | |
| K - Yeah I'm sweating. | | | | |
| M - Really hot.<br>You should be hot by now because I chained you up and you can't.<br>You should be sweating. | low pitch | gestures<br>eye contact<br>points | close | |
| K - I am.<br>Pretend you chase me. | | | | |
| M - Let's say you were dying in sweat.<br>woo woo | noise | | | |
| K - I was already dead.<br>(Teacher enters) | | | | |
| K - I'm in the dungeon. | | | | |
| Teacher - You're in the dungeon!<br>What did you do? Were you dead? | | | | |
| K - No they captured me. | | | | |
| Teacher - On no. | | | | |

RAW DATA 3

| Verbal Comm. | Non-verbal Comm. | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Vocal Sounds | Body Movemt | Persn Space | Use of Material |
| S - We're the bad guys. | | | | |
| Teacher - Poor Kaitlyn. Is she a princess? | | | | |
| S - Yeah. | | | | |
| Teacher - You better set her free. | | | | |
| K - They're bad guys. I'm good. | | | | |
| Teacher - Well I hope somebody comes to rescue you. | | | | |
| M - Five hundred degrees, yeah. | | | | |
| K - You didn't know but it went out of control and started going down. | | | | |
| M - Let's say I put it just right for you to stay alive O.K. | | | | |
| K - Pretend by accident you pushed the button for the dragon to come in. | | eye contact | | |
| M - No he's under my powers cause he lives with. He's under my powers. He takes my orders. | | | | |
| K - Is it hot? | | | | |
| M - Uh just right. | | | | |
| K - Yeah it was just right. | | | | |
| S - ? | | | | |
| K - No it's not. Pretend you didn't know but you got it to the right temperature to live. | | gestures to wall | | paper on wall |
| M - Yeah because I wanted you for dinner and I could kill you. | | | | |
| K - Yeah but you didn't know that I was magic. | | | | |

| RAW DATA | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Verbal Comm. | Non-verbal Comm. | | | Use of Material |
| | Vocal Sounds | Body Movemt | Persn Space | |
| M - Just pretend that you didn't know that this was a secret book and __?__ O.K.<br>If I call somebody I just saw. | | | | |
| K - You fell asleep too. | | | | |
| M - How? | | | | |
| K - You gotta.<br>No you hold on this and then you fell asleep. | loud | | | |
| M - Uh uh. If you press this it wears off. Let's say you pressed it O.K. S___.<br>Woo woo<br>You have to press it all the way.<br>That's enough.<br>I'm never gonna put on this __?__ again. | noise | | | |
| K - You threw it in because now you know that was magic.<br>Good magic. | | | | |
| M - This makes you bad magic. | | | | |
| K - ? | | | | |
| S - O.K. we press on the same. | | | | |
| M - Makes bad magic.<br>Probably makes you good magic but it's bad magic and you __?__ on it. | | | | |
| K - Yeah it made me sleep for four minutes. Whole day, whole night, and then four weeks. Six for one.<br>How about two? | | | | |
| M - One week is longer.<br>I know 13 weeks. | | | | |
| S - Wrong number. | | | | phone |
| K - No pretend you didn't know but it made me good magic. | | | | |
| M - No let's pretend it made you bad magic. | | | | |

RAW DATA

| Verbal Comm. | Non-verbal Comm. | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Vocal Sounds | Body Movemt | Persn Space | Use of Material |
| K - No I'm pretending it make me good magic. | | | | |
| M - No bad magic. It made you bad magic. And if you phoned on it again it makes you good magic and you're back to yourself O.K. | | | | |
| K - Yeah but I would be still a princess. | | | | |
| M - This is pulling out pulling out. | | | | blocks |
| K - No that's the lock for the dungeon. | | eye contact<br>smile | | block |
| M - No if I take it out the dragon will come out and there's pretend bars right there.<br>And it can come out in the dungeon and bite your head off. | | gestures<br>eye contact | | |
| K - You didn't! | | | | |
| M - Say I closed it a little bit so the dragon would bump his head.<br>Ah ah. | laughs | | | blocks |
| S - Ah ah. | laughs | | | |
| K - The dragon bumped his head? | | | | |
| M - Yeah. | | | | |
| S - Ah ah ah. | laughs | | | |
| K - You guys were laughing like crazy. You weren't looking but I got out. | | | | |
| S & M - Ha Ha Ha | laugh | | | |
| K - You were laughing too crazy and I got out. | | | | |
| M - You didn't know where the key is. We have the key. | | | | |
| K - But I picked the lock with something. By magic I can open it -- cause I have magic. | | eye contact | | |

| RAW DATA | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Verbal Comm. | Non-verbal Comm. | | | Use of Material |
| | Vocal Sounds | Body Movemt | Persn Space | |
| M - By mistake I put electricute bars and you never and you couldn't break down. | | eye contact | | |
| K - It looks like I could get out. I made them disappear for real life. | pitch loud | | | |

Appendix H

Data Collection Timetable

| | |
|---|---|
| April 21 | Acclimatization |
| April 22 | Acclimatization |
| April 23 | Acclimatization |
| | |
| April 27 | Target Female |
| April 28 | Target Female |
| April 29 | Target Female |
| April 30 | Target Female |
| May 1 | Target Female |
| | interviewed Target Female |
| | interviewed Teacher |
| May 4 | Target Female |
| May 5 | Target Female |
| | interviewed Target Female's Mother |
| May 6 | Target Female |
| May 7 | Target Female |
| May 8 | Target Female |
| | interviewed Target Female |
| | |
| May 11 | Target Male |
| May 12 | Target Male |
| May 13 | Fieldtrip |
| May 14 | Target Male |
| | interviewed Target Male |
| | interviewed Teacher |
| May 15 | Target Male not in school |
| May 19 | Target Male |
| May 20 | Target Male |
| May 21 | Target Male |
| | interviewed Target Male |
| | interviewed Target Male's Mother |
| May 22 | Target Male |
| May 25 | Target Male |
| | interviewed Teacher |

Appendix I

Imaginative Play Data on Target Female

| | Classroom Center (& Playtheme) | Amount of Imaginative Play | Number of Other Children at Center |
|---|---|---|---|
| Day 1 (Monday) | Blocks (ships & space) | 60 min. | 3-4 |
| Day 2 | Blocks (space) | 30 min. | 3 |
| Day 3 | Playhouse (hospital) | 15-20 min. | 1 |
| Day 4 | Puzzles | 0 | 3 |
| Day 5 | Blocks (space) | 15-20 min. | 3 (includes Target Male) |
| Day 6 (Monday) | Blocks (space) | 60 min. | 3-4 |
| Day 7 | Puppets (cat & family) | 30 min. | 2 |
| Day 8 | Water (kitchen) | 20-30 min. | 1 |
| Day 9 | Blocks (castle) | 15-20 min. | 3 (includes Target Male) |
| Day 10 | Blocks (castle & space) | 40 min. | 2-3 (includes Target Male) |

Appendix J

Imaginative Play Data on Target Male

| | Classroom Center (& Playtheme) | Amount of Imaginative Play | Number of Other Children at Center |
|---|---|---|---|
| Day 1 (Tuesday) | Blocks (farm) | 35-45 min. | 3 |
| | Sand (dinosaurs) | | 3 |
| Day 2 | Carpet Games (farm & Potatohead) | 30 min. | 1 |
| Day 3 | Playhouse (farm) | 8 min. | 2 |
| Day 4 (Tuesday) | Blocks (farm & monster) | 50 min. | 3 |
| Day 5 | Sand (farm) | 30 min. | 2 |
| | Puppets (animals) | | 3 |
| Day 6 | Sand (farm) | 35 min. | 3 |
| Day 7 | Games (village) | 20 min. | 1 |
| | Playhouse (dog) | | 3 |
| Day 8 (Monday) | Sand (farm) | 30 min. | 2 |

Appendix K

Coding Rules for Matrix

1. Only the target children's utterances and actions were coded.

2. Utterances were coded that were specific to the imaginative plot development or that were part of the group dynamics in the play.

3. Repetition of an utterance was not coded. Rephrasing was usually coded.

4. Information given to the teacher by the children was coding if it related to the plot development.

5. Non-verbal Language:
   - vocal sounds that were informative were coded; repetition was not coded
   - gestures and body movements were not coded but used as interpretive context for spoken information

6. Carrier Phrases/Markers:
   - these were coded with the utterance
   - coded separately from the utterance if a different purpose or strategy was evident

7. "No" was coded separately from the utterance if a different purpose or strategy was evident.

8. If an utterance was unintelligible, it was not coded.

# Appendix L

## Sample of Coding Transcript

K - Kaitlyn
M - Michael
S - Girl (not coded)

Date: 7 May  Data Day: 9-K

| RAW DATA | | | | | CODES |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Verbal Comm. | Non-verbal Comm. | | | | |
| | Vocal Sounds | Body Movemt | Persn Space | Use of Material | |
| (in Blocks Center: Castle theme) | | | | | |
| M - You have to be the queen.<br>I'm the king. | | | | | I-B/C<br>I-A |
| K - This is the throne room right. | | | | flashlight | I-A/B |
| K - I'm gonna call down one of the servants. | | eye contact | | phone | I-B |
| - Who's the servants? | | | | | I-A |
| - We need someone for a servant. | | | | | I-A |
| M - Just pretend there are servants. | | | | | I-A/C |
| K - O.K. | | | | | I-A |
| M - Just remember 461-24. | | | | | I-A/B |
| K - No. OK, pretend this is the intercom to call them on ...<br>(S enters Center) | | | | phone | I-B |
| K - They are going to be the servants so you stay over. | loud | | | | I-A/C |
| S - I'm not the servant. | | | | | |
| K - You're the servant. You stay out there. | | | | | II-C |
| S - What do I do? | | | | | |
| K - Cause I'm calling you down on the intercom.<br>Nu nu nu ... | noise | | | phone | I/II-A |

| RAW DATA | | | | | CODES |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Verbal Comm. | Non-verbal Comm. | | | | |
| | Vocal Sounds | Body Movemt | Persn Space | Use of Material | |
| S - Where's my phone? | | | | | |
| M - You don't get a phone, King and Queen only. N___'s phone is back here. My phone is back here. You don't get a phone | | eye contact | | | I/II-A<br>I/II-A<br>I/II-A |
| K - Talk into that yellow can. Hello servant. | authority voice | | | phone | I/III-C<br>I-A |
| S - Yes? | | | | | |
| K - Come down to the throne room now. | authority voice | | | | I-C |
| S - Where's the door? | | | | | |
| M - You ___?___. | | | | | |
| K - Close the door. | | | | | I/II-C |
| M - Shut the door when you come in. Shut the door. We don't want bugs coming in. | loud | eye contact | | | I-C<br>I-A/C |
| K - You get us some tea right? (N comes back to center) | | | | | I-C |
| K - No. You can't come here. | loud | | | | II-C |
| N - My name's here. (Nametag is on center board) | | | | | |
| M - Yeah, she can come here. | | | | | III-C |
| K - You are the servants then. | pitch | | | | II/III-C |
| M - Uh, Uh -- she's the second - she's the first queen. You're the second queen. | loud | points | | | I/II-B/C<br>I/II-B |
| K - You're going to be the princess.<br>She's a princess O.K. | | | | | II-B/C (repetition) |
| N - No. | whines | | | | |
| M - Then I'll be a prince. | | eye contact | | | III-B |
| K - O.K. Then she's a princess. | pitch | | | | II/III-A/C |

| RAW DATA | | | | | CODES |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Verbal Comm. | Non-verbal Comm. | | | | |
| | Vocal Sounds | Body Movemt | Persn Space | Use of Material | |
| N - I don't want to be a princess.<br>K - O.K. then you be the second queen.<br>M - I'll be the first king. | | | | | III-C<br>I-A |

Appendix M

Operational Definitions of the Matrix Categories

Purposes

I. To advance the play
- to initiate the play
- to continue the play
- to maintain the imaginative element
- to help role development

II. To control the play
- to establish/maintain control over direction of play
- to establish/maintain ownership

III. To encourage group dynamics
- to integrate others (keep them informed or recruit)
- to cooperate with other players
- to accomodate other players

IV. Unknown
- did not understand the purpose for action or language

Strategies

A) To give or to solicit information: This is an elaboration of the play theme by adding details and exploring the topic and materials of current focus. It may show creativity and leadership but in "small steps". This is an enrichment of the status quo.

e.g. "We're playing castle." (telling a new player)
"I will just go to my spaceship and get some."

B) To add significant ideas for theme and role development: This illustrates a significant shift forward in the theme development. This is usually accomplished by adding a meaningful component of information or giving self or others an identity that will greatly change all subsequent play development. There is evidence of creative thought, leadership, and the ability to move from present progression of ideas in a significant manner.

e.g. "Astro gave me a new energy cell so I'm grown again."
"I turned her into a human I hope you know."

C) To manage interaction with or for other players: This is responding to others and directing responses of others to achieve involvement of participants. It may include allowing others to "win" or directing others to advance their role in a specific way. Negotiation and mediation of conflicts, offers to cooperate on certain conditions or ultimatums, and expressions of ownership are considered under this heading.

e.g. "OK, you don't have to go into the dungeon."
"Just say you answer the phone, OK P___."

D) Unknown: did not understand the strategy for action or language.